

**HIS
MORTGAGED
WIFE**

BUSCH



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His Mortgaged Wife

By Bonnie Busch

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Morality Court
Out of the Middle West



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Dedicated to Pansy
The sweetest flower that has ever
grown in Friendship's Garden.

His Mortgaged Wife

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I

Edward Clayton was lonely! Dining in solitary splendor at his flat in Cavendish Square, he considered himself unquestionably the loneliest man in London.

In the early twenties Clayton had married a pretty, unsophisticated girl. As time went on, she grew prettier—and more sophisticated. As his prosperity developed, so did her conceit. Every successful business venture of his made her thirst for further adventure.

She had always been fond of her husband but her wealth of affection, she felt, was not properly appraised by him; other men, more appreciative and discerning, valued it so highly that she began distributing it as promiscuously and lavishly as she did his money. Clayton had no desire for syndicated love and determined to cancel his matrimonial bond.

By the time the legal formalities were completed he had adjusted and capitalized his business to the point where he could leave it without loss. It then seemed as if London would be an excellent place in which to forget. Englishmen had some idea of leisure; Americans were all too busy to think of it, except those who thought of nothing else, and such drivel as they talked was intolerable to him.

On the trip over he had made the acquaintance of several interesting people, but none who contemplated a stay in London. He thus arrived at the *Hotel Savoy* unheralded and unknown. Here, after a few aimless days of watching the crowds and the unvarying routine of hotel life, he decided he could relax only in a place that had some semblance of home.

Looking for quarters and getting settled had kept him diverted for several weeks but now that he was "all set," he felt that unutterable loneliness one experiences upon landing in a strange town where there is not even an acquaintance to notify on arriving.

The following morning, however, the postscript to a business letter from Arthur Gray, his attorney, raised new hopes:

"My cousin, Grace Warren, now Mrs. Archibald Marsden, is living in London. Something or other—Mayfair. Why don't you look her up? 'Thee' was her ideal in the old days, when we all walked together in meekness of spirit to the Friends' School."

Grace Warren stood out very clearly in memory's roll-call of Clayton's early school days. She had elicited his boyish sympathies for she had no mother and lived with stern "holier-than-thou" grandparents. It would be delightful to look up this little girl friend. He tried to picture the type of woman the prim Quaker child, with the wistful, violet eyes and reddish, corkscrew curls, had grown to be. He recalled various little scenes that it would be amusing to see if she too remembered. It

would also be a pleasure to look back upon and discuss a past that held no bitter memories.

Gray's letter called forth his first review of boyhood, for it is only when one is near the end of the chapter that the pictorial pages of childhood grow interesting. When one's history is still in the making the leaves are never turned back much further than the events that bear upon the present.

Clayton lost no time in finding Mrs. Archibald Marsden's address and in sending a note to her by his man. He had hoped Wilson would return with an invitation to call but, much to his annoyance, Wilson had not waited for an answer. He was sorry he had written at all. Had it not been for his letter, he could have chanced finding her in that afternoon. As it was, he would have to wait for her reply.

With all his resources for staging follies of any vintage, securing a leading lady and spectacular chorus for his London season, Clayton, in the midst of plenty, remained hungry for companionship. He was not the type of man to be amused with the society of the women whom he could meet without the formality of an introduction. He had never had the time or inclination to cultivate a taste for promiscuity, or to look outside the bounds of conventionality for amusement.

Clayton's note had arrived just at the time the maid was taking the mail up to her mistress' room. Mrs. Marsden, however, exhibited no interest in the morning's offering, which looked like a mass of statements from tradespeople.

It was not until her husband returned home for luncheon that she glanced over the batch of

letters, picking out the one of whose contents she could not be certain and handing the others to Archibald apologetically. He received the presentation indifferently, evincing no more curiosity than she as to the contents and tossed it back on the table.

“Oh, Mars!” cried Grace delightedly, “one of my old school friends is here in London, without an acquaintance in town save me, and writes to ask—”

“—you to make life pleasant for her?” cut in Marsden petulantly. “I’ll tell you now, Grace, I’ve had my fill of playing Baedeker to your ‘Yankee Doodles.’ The last ‘Spangled Star’ that you had visiting us from the States cured me of any desire to be hospitable to any more of them.”

“Edward Clayton is not seeking our hospitality. He merely asks permission to call, but if you do not wish it, I will not answer.”

“Who is this Edward Clayton?”

“He is a client of Arthur’s, and has, I understand, become one of the most successful business men in New York.”

Marsden put out his hand for the note.

“Well, I suppose you might as well ask the fellow to dinner. We are doing nothing tonight, and if he is on his own he won’t mind short notice.”

His wife sat down obediently and enthusiastically to get off the invitation. Before they had finished luncheon, the messenger returned with Clayton’s acceptance.

“He’s coming,” Grace announced. “Whom would you ask to make a *parti carrée*?”

“I shouldn’t bother to have anyone. Let him dine with us *en famille* tonight.”

The afternoon passed quickly for Mrs. Marsden—yesterdays with their golden memories tinting today. Her spirits rose gaily like the bright sparks of the grate-fire that her husband was stirring into a welcoming warmth for the arrival of their guest, and as she sat idly fingering a bud she had just pulled from the midst of a bowl of flowers, a feeling of retrospection mingled itself with her anticipation.

Time had mellowed her beauty into the ripe perfection of womanhood. Her eyes held within them the softness of velvet veiled with a violet dewiness that suggested depth of feeling. Her mouth was perplexing; it seemed both sad and gay. Simply gowned in black, a scarf covering her shoulders, her figure appeared lithe and graceful, from the mass of delicately tinted copper hair piled high on her head to the tip of her buckled slipper, resting daintily on the cushion before her.

With his first step into the Marsden drawing room Clayton did not recognize in the beautiful woman sitting there the little girl he used to know, but, as she came toward him with outstretched hands and he looked into her unchanged eyes, his mental picture of Grace Warren gradually blended itself into the personality of Grace Marsden.

“Edward Clayton!” she cried. “You haven’t changed a bit!”

“What a delightful little playmate he must have been,” Marsden exclaimed, taking the hand of his guest who towered above him, without waiting to be introduced.

"I don't believe I have changed since my salad days," laughed Clayton.

Mrs. Marsden sat down on the sofa before the fire and motioned Clayton to a seat beside her.

"It is indeed a pleasure to see you again," he said, seating himself. "It carries me back to those happy school days. Tell me, what have you been doing all these years—but after all, it can't be so very many years since you left the schoolroom. How long have you been married?"

"Nearly four years."

"Four years! That is a long time," Clayton exclaimed, mentally calculating the age at which she must have married, "but I imagine it has seemed very short to you."

"The years have flown by and I seem always to have lived in England. When my grandparents died, I asked my guardian to let me have my last year of school in Europe. I wanted to go to my mother's old school. But tell me something about yourself. How did you escape matrimony?"

"I did not escape, or, perhaps, I should say I have just escaped. Mine was a shipwreck on that sea, vessel a total loss, but all passengers saved."

"You Americans usually do make your getaway intact, don't you?" asked Marsden. "You have the reputation of taking to the lifeboats on the least provocation."

"Well, there is nothing in sticking to a sinking ship," retorted Clayton.

Grace, feeling that the subject could hardly be a pleasant one, broke in: "Are you over here on business or pleasure?"

“Presumably pleasure, but I find it rather a business.”

“Then you are free to enjoy yourself while you are here?”

“Yes, time is no longer the essence of anything.”

“I should say you were fitted for the quintessence of enjoyment,” said Marsden.

“I am all ready to play but must find some playmates.”

“You can count on us any time. Grace and I always enjoy a frolic.”

The announcement of dinner broke in upon their conversation.

In the subdued candlelight of the dining-room, Grace's beauty struck Clayton even more forcibly. The meal was a merry one, with much banter between Grace and Clayton, Marsden an amused and interested listener, only interposing a remark when the relative merits of England and America were under discussion.

Shortly after they returned to the drawing-room, Clayton reluctantly bade them goodnight, but not before he had their promise to dine with him the following evening at the *Savoy*.

Never had he met a more charming woman. Marsden was evidently a pleasure-loving chap, who would gladly accept any good times that were offered. Grace was undoubtedly devoted to her husband and not seeking any flirtations. Certainly everything seemed propitious for a delightful platonic friendship.

II

As she went over the events of the evening Grace could not analyze her feelings. Life with her grandparents had been so drab and colorless that when she came to school in England, she had never experienced one pang of homesickness. Yet tonight she was suffering from it. She longed to see some of the old landmarks and yearned for the sight of her girlhood friends. In London, she had a large list of acquaintances, but no chum. The women in her set chose men for their pals.

She heard her husband walking up and down in his room as he did when he was upset. She felt guilty to have been lying there dreaming, when she might have gone in to him and helped him get over his fit of depression.

When she entered the room, however, he turned on her savagely.

"Why can't you leave me alone? I came in here to think and do not wish to be disturbed."

"Don't think things over all by yourself, Mars. Talk your difficulties over with me. They clarify sometimes when you thrash them out with someone else."

"Grace, you're too narrow and puritanical for a man to be able to discuss anything with you. All you think of suggesting, when I tell you I am hard up, is some martyrdom, some new sacrifice we can make. I don't want to be told how easy it is to go without. There is nothing helpful in that kind of cant."

“But material things are not essential to happiness, Mars. With love, health and youth, surely there is nothing terrifying in our income being reduced.”

Marsden stopped abruptly in his walk and jerked open the door for her.

“Please go to bed,” he said, “I told you I wanted to think.”

Back in bed, Grace’s thoughts were a jumbled mass of perplexity until sleep smoothed out her worried brow.

She arose early to have breakfast with her husband and was delighted to find him in good spirits.

“I am sorry I was such a brute last night,” he said, kissing her. “Please forgive me.”

“Why, the idea, Mars! There is nothing to forgive. I’m going to start economizing today so you won’t have to give me so large an allowance for the house.”

“That’s all tommyrot. Saving pennies won’t do me any good. Get your hat on, and I will blow you off to a new evening gown at Lucille’s. You are getting dowdy, my dear, and all these sombre hues you affect are getting on my nerves.”

“Don’t be silly, Mars. I need no new frocks.”

“Get on your hat, like a good little girl, just to please me. I intend picking out something for you myself.”

Grace knew it was useless to try to dissuade him, so entered into his plans with all the enthusiasm she could muster for so ill-timed an extravagance.

Marsden gave the saleswoman at the shop to

understand he wanted something very smart. Manikin after manikin pivoted around on the stage and walked down to them to permit a closer inspection of the gowns. Finally Marsden selected a turquoise blue satin and a cloth of silver for Grace to try on. They both suited her admirably, but she could not display any interest, for they were so frightfully expensive. Marsden, unable to choose between them ordered both put on his account and sent home.

"Oh, you extravagant boy!" Grace cried as soon as they were out on the street. "It is darling of you to want me to have those dresses, but surely you can't afford them now."

"Why spoil everything with a lecture on conservation? I am sick to death of the subject."

"I'm sorry. I will try not to be a kill-joy again."

Neither of them broke the silence on the return home from their shopping expedition.

Clayton found his day largely occupied with pleasant anticipations of the evening and the important business of getting a box for the theatre and a desirable table for dinner. London now wore an entirely different aspect for him. There was a touch of color in its heretofore drab attire.

At a quarter to seven he was waiting at the *Savoy* for his guests. He found the lobby an interesting place. The constant stream of smartly gowned women followed by their bored-looking escorts was enough to keep his mind well occupied and interested.

Punctually at seven the Marsdens appeared. Clayton was *ebloué* by Grace's appearance in the cloth-of-silver gown. It was extremely

decolleté and set off her figure to the very utmost. She was absolutely radiant. How could Marsden walk with that air of indifference by the side of so glorious a creature. He greeted them enthusiastically and piloted them to their seats, noticing with the greatest satisfaction the glances of admiration Grace drew from the tables near by, as they sat down.

Marsden was in the gayest of humors.

"It was awfully good of you to ask us here tonight," he said. "Grace and I had rather lost the habit of dining out. This seems like old times, doesn't it, Grace?"

"Yes, I love this place," she answered simply.

"Then let us arrange to come here regularly," suggested Clayton. "I am enchanted with the place myself now."

"Oh, no," said Grace, "coming to the same restaurant every night requires too many different frocks."

"I was just thinking of exacting your promise not to wear any other gown than the one you have on," replied Clayton. "I've never seen anything so alluring. You have perfect taste."

"Thank you," smiled Grace, "but I cannot take the credit—Mars chose this frock for me."

"I told Grace she was scintillating this evening," said Marsden. "I have a hard time keeping her from draping herself in crêpe. Black should be worn only by women who are in mourning for their youth, I think."

"By the way, Marsden, what business are you engaged in? Or does your attention to so charming a wife occupy all your time?"

"Oh, I'm soldiering, you know," replied

Marsden, his face losing the brightness of the moment before, "and I wish I were jolly well out of the service. You don't happen to want a permanent London representative, do you?"

Clayton did not reply for a moment. Perhaps he could think of something. It certainly would be ideal if he could in some way insure the daily companionship of Grace and her husband. He must look Marsden up and see if he had any ability he could use.

"Let me think," he said. "Perhaps I may be able to suggest something later on."

Grace was pleased with his interest. Any prospect of a change for her husband was encouraging. She knew the service held little hope of promotion. Her inheritance was just about gone and Mars' income could in no way keep pace with his expensive regiment and extravagant tastes. She felt sure no change could be for the worse and this charming countryman of hers probably held keys that would unlock other doors for him.

"I do hope you can think of something," she began. "I know he has loads of ability—if he only had a chance."

Clayton looked up quickly at the last few words; they had a familiar sound. All his business life he had known these men of ability who never had a chance. Every street was full of them, except Bradstreet. He had better keep Marsden on a social plane.

"Let me think it over," he repeated, smilingly. "Anything that tends to put our pleasant acquaintance on a more permanent basis is most interesting."

Grace delicately steered the conversation into

less personal channels and they moved out into the foyer for coffee.

When they reached the theatre the play was on. Grace gave all her attention to the performance but Marsden was restless. The moment the first act was over, he went out.

“Was your husband serious in suggesting a business connection with me?” Clayton asked.

“I don’t know but I do want him to get out of that treadmill. He is ambitious and there is no chance there for advancement.”

“I really did not come over here to think about business but, of course, a certain amount of it is inescapable. I have never considered a London connection and, at the moment, it does not seem feasible. Still I should greatly like to be of some service to you. Perhaps there may be some way in which I can help him. Can you think of any?”

“No, I can’t. He never tells me much about his affairs. I know he is horribly dissatisfied—but you came over to get a rest, not to hunt up business opportunities for your new-found friends. Let us discuss something less boring for you.”

“My dear Grace, nothing could be boring to me that is of interest to you. Your devotion and loyalty to your husband, shown by your whole manner, appeals to me more than to most men, perhaps because I have known the lack of it. That is why I should like to have you for a friend, a real friend.”

“What a lovely speech! Very few men compliment women on their devotion to their husbands. What you said, or rather didn’t say, about yourself interests me very much. I sup-

pose it is a woman's curiosity but, since it is, I must tell you I've been wondering how you came to be divorced. I know it is terribly personal and impertinent—don't bother to tell me about it—I'm ashamed of having brought up the subject."

"I am flattered by your interest. I suppose it was my fault to a large degree. I was too busy to be very attentive. The lady is married again, I hear. I can't imagine myself marrying again but, if I ever do commit that folly, I will go to the other extreme and devote my life to the happiness of my wife."

"All of which indicates that, although you will not admit it to yourself you are looking forward to marrying again. Just now you would be most susceptible. I must watch over you while you are here to see that you make no more mistakes. Come and tell me about each new passion as it buds, and I will help you select the one that will bloom into a happy marriage."

"Splendid," agreed Clayton. "That is a bargain. Up to the moment I am absolutely 'fancy free' but I will come to you with my first blossom of romance."

The curtain rose and Marsden dropped into the chair back of them. In one glance Grace saw that her husband had been drinking. She had been fearful of this outcome when he drank so freely at dinner.

All through the next act she was restless, wondering how she could keep Marsden from leaving them again, but before the curtain had gone down he had disappeared. Grace made no comments upon her husband's actions. He did not return during the third act and they waited

in the box until the theatre was nearly empty before she asked Clayton to take her home.

“He has run into some pal and forgotten all about us,” she explained, struggling to appear unconcerned.

“I know just how that is,” Clayton assured her, “and I shall be delighted to take you home.”

Grace was grateful that Clayton seemed to think nothing of her husband's cavalier treatment of her and his host; she was hurt and humiliated. They spoke little during the drive home in the taxi, but there emanated from him something protective and big, that Grace instinctively sensed, which soothed the jangle and discord of the evening's finale.

III

Next morning Clayton sat in his room reviewing the past night. It had been delightful once again to feel in touch with the world about him. Grace was splendid; her promise to watch over him, amusing. Single life looked pleasing at the moment but if he ever did become dissatisfied with its blessedness he hoped he would find someone like her.

Marsden, too, was not half bad. He was assuredly not jealous. Of course, Grace's devotion precluded any such possibility to any sane man but, then, the husbands of very beautiful women were not often sane. He wondered if it was worth while to pursue the question of business relations with Marsden any further. There was no use in holding out hopes if they were not to be realized. That would be sure to bring trouble. Evidently the man was not particularly reliable, as his disappearance the night before proved. He would forget that suggestion, at least, for the present.

At that moment Marsden was announced and Clayton rose to greet his early morning visitor.

"I dropped in, old man, to offer an explanation and an apology for my disappearance last night."

"Nonsense, Marsden, none is necessary as far as I am concerned."

"I noticed a friend in the stalls," Marsden continued, unmindful of the interruption, "and went down to have a word with him before he

could get away. He took me to the bar and I became so interested in a proposition he made that I forgot all about the play's closing. When I returned the theatre was empty and you were gone. I am greatly obliged to you for taking Grace home."

"It was a pleasure, I assure you."

"It was inexcusable of me to vanish like that but, perhaps, if I tell you what the man's proposal was, you will understand. I've wanted a car for a long time. I know motors fairly well and am a good driver so these cheap go-carts don't interest me much. This chap is stone-broke and has a Rolls Royce with a touring body almost as good as new. He must have money, so offered it to me for six hundred and fifty pounds. You know that is a bargain. I tried to get him to take my note, but he must have cash as he has to leave London. With a little time I can sell it and make a good profit. In my hands it won't deteriorate. How would you like to go in on it? You put up the money, I buy the car and give you a mortgage on it for six hundred and fifty pounds and we divide the profit when I sell it. In the meantime, we have a good car to use—but perhaps you have bought one already."

"No," said Clayton, "I have not and had not contemplated doing so. When moving about, I find it cheaper to hire. This proposition is good, however, and I will gladly join you in it. Shall I make out the check to you or your friend?"

"Better make it to me; if he knew I had interested an American in it, he might jump the price."

"Sure enough," laughed Clayton, "Americans all look like easy money wherever they go and most of them are."

He pulled out his check book and wrote Marsden the check for the amount.

"Thanks, awfully, Clayton. I'll hurry around to him before he changes his mind, take the car to a garage I know and tune it up a bit—will bring it around to show it to you tomorrow afternoon. This is an off-week for me. After I report in the morning I can count on being excused for the day."

"I envy you the necessity of having to report. Unless there is some call on one's time the days drag horribly, I think."

"Why don't you drop in on Grace this afternoon? I shall be in overalls and full of grease. If you are there for tea, tell her not to expect me. I must be off now. I'll have the mortgage ready in a day or two," he called out as he closed the hall door.

Clayton was delighted at the suggestion of calling on Grace. With something in view to occupy his afternoon he turned immediately to his morning mail, so as to have it disposed of for the day.

When he presented himself at Marsden's house he was disappointed in not being able to have the tête-a-tête he had anticipated. He thought the well-built interloper in riding togs, standing with back to the door, was a young man, until the figure turned around and he was presented to a young lady. He had never had such a hearty handshake or brusque how-do-you-do from the gentler sex.

Clayton took his seat beside Grace, facing

Dariel Thurston, who seemed to shun any support the arms or back of the chair might lend her.

Grace poured him a cup of tea and Miss Thurston offered him the bread and butter. He was not tempted by that or the cake she recommended as delicious but he could not refuse the tea at Grace's hands. He had many things he wanted to discuss with her but this young girl seemed to keep the talk out in the open, strenuously kicking the ball of conversation from hockey field to polo grounds. Finally Clayton managed to deliver Marsden's message.

"What is putting him in overalls and covering him with grease?" Grace demanded.

"Why, don't you know he has just bought a Rolls Royce? He expected to spend his afternoon going over the motor."

"Bought a motor?" gasped Grace.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Dariel, "you can do with one."

"Oh, I am mad about motoring," Grace cried, "but—but—it is a surprise," she added falteringly.

"I say, don't let a bit of good news bowl you out. I told Manning to come here to fetch me at half-past five, so he must be at the door."

Clayton put Miss Thurston in the waiting limousine with pleasure and hurried back to Grace.

"Are you really in earnest, Edward, that Mars has purchased an automobile?" she asked anxiously, the moment he entered the room.

"Well, I think so, Grace. He told me he had a great bargain offered him and I understood

when he left me he was on his way to take it up."

"Where did you see him?"

"Oh, he dropped by this morning to apologize for being sidetracked last night. Now contain yourself until you see your new toy. I have never met such a curious woman."

"There is some joke about all this, Edward. I know Mars was not in the market for motor cars when he left this morning."

Clayton was unable to steer Grace's thoughts away from the automobile. He realized the news of its purchase had been very disconcerting to her and regretted having been the news bearer.

Walking home, Clayton tried to think why Grace was so upset by the idea of her husband's having purchased a car. It must be that she thought Marsden could ill afford accessories of that kind. Could they be in any financial difficulty? Her gowns did not indicate it, yet evidently she did not favor extravagances. It was an interesting problem. Her husband would probably offer the solution soon.

At three o'clock the next day, Marsden and Grace came for him in the car. Grace had apparently been satisfied by Marsden's explanation, whatever it was. She was sitting in the tonneau, beaming with delight.

Clayton looked the car over critically. It was a Rolls sure enough, but it was travel worn. A fair estimate of its age, he thought, was three years and the seller more to be congratulated than the buyer at six hundred and fifty pounds. He might probably get out whole on a sale but cash profits were out of the question. He would

get his dividends in being an associate member.

"What do you think of it?" asked Marsden.

"I can tell better after a ride."

"Well, let's be off then. Get in behind with Grace and I will drive."

He became pleased with his investment in Grace's delight in motoring. He would be in no hurry for the car to be sold. Speeding through the country by her side was most enjoyable.

They stopped at a little Riverside inn for tea. The weather had become warm enough to bring people out on the water, so Grace suggested having tea on the lawn which sloped down to the river's edge.

"This is a fascinating sight!" Clayton exclaimed as he got his first view of the Thames with the holiday crowd upon it. Rowboats, punts and canoes with their cargoes of brightly dressed women and athletic-looking men passed by in a gay pageant. Swans were majestically patrolling the water below the lawn, waiting for the crumbs that invariably came their way at teatime.

"This is nothing to what it will be later on," Grace promised. "The houseboats will be lined along the bank, each one made to look as beautiful as possible in its fresh paint with its flower boxes a mass of bloom."

"It can't be more attractive than it is to-day," said Clayton, glancing from the water to Grace.

"Hello, there!" called Marsden to Captain Thurston, who was just about to seat himself at the adjoining table.

“What luck!” Thurston exclaimed, coming over to them.

Clayton took a great liking to the captain the moment he met him.

“How do you happen to be strolling in here all by yourself today?” asked Grace.

“Dariel has a troop of girls over at the house this afternoon and I felt very much *de trop* and in need of a long walk.”

“You’re on foot, are you?” asked Marsden. “We can give you a lift home.”

“I have a much better suggestion,” offered Clayton. “Let us carry Captain Thurston in to town to dinner with us.”

“A much better suggestion,” agreed Marsden. “You’ll come in with us, won’t you Thurston?”

“I shall be pleased to go along if you are not going to change.”

“We shan’t be changing,” Marsden assured him, “and we can have a look in at one of the music halls after.”

“Does that appeal to you, Edward?” asked Grace.

“Anything does—I’m enjoying every minute of my time here that I don’t spend by myself.”

“Aren’t you on good terms with yourself?” Thurston inquired.

“Not very,” Clayton replied. “There is considerable contempt caused by too much familiarity.”

“That’s very funny,” laughed Thurston. “I must tell you what my kid sister told me of you yesterday.”

“That the contempt was not mine exclusively?”

“Not at all. She said she admired you tremendously because you were not like other men who seemed so thoroughly satisfied with themselves.”

“I shall have to see more of that sister of yours.”

“Then you will have to get a mount; she is in the saddle from morning until night.”

“Hadn’t we better start for town now?” asked Marsden.

Grace was quick to agree for she had noticed her husband’s restlessness for some time.

When Marsden brought the car around to the entrance, he called to Thurston to jump in front with him. Clayton was grateful that his invitation to the captain had not robbed him of the pleasure of talking to Grace on their way back to town.

IV

"I have good news for you, Grace," Marsden said some weeks later, when the maid had left them alone in the dining room with their coffee.

"Really, Mars, I'll be delighted to hear it. Do tell me quickly. You have not been given a yacht to sell and use in the interim, have you?"

"Don't try to make facetious remarks, but listen, if you wish to hear what I have to say. I was telling Clayton today about the house we have always had at Henley in the summer and he hoped we would be going on the Thames soon, so he could visit us. He does not enjoy London at this season. I told him quite frankly we were not taking it on this year, as we could not afford it. Then he said, if we would just run the place and have him down, he would be only too glad to take care of the lease."

"But, Mars—"

"Don't 'but' until I have finished. He wants to go fifty-fifty with us, as he expressed it."

"But, Mars, we can't enter into an agreement of that kind. It would be a great mistake."

"It will be a great help to me, so no doubt you will oppose it."

"I do not wish to oppose things that are helpful to you, but how can we put ourselves under such obligations?"

"What rot you talk! It is he who is the

beneficiary. For no more expense than he would have to pay at a hotel among strangers, he can be in a charming home with friends. He is awfully bored with himself unless he is with us. As it is, he is around here every day and with us most of the time."

"I know, Mars, but it is not like having a man about the house all the time. I shall feel most uncomfortable."

"You have never seemed averse to his society. I tell you, Grace, I am fed up with your preferring to play martyr on all occasions rather than to take what the gods provide and get a little joy out of life."

"I don't know what the gods are trying to provide for me, but I do know that I much prefer to do with what my husband can provide than to accept the assistance of others. As we can't afford Henley this summer, Mars dear, let us do without it. We can spend a day on the Thames occasionally and really have a very nice summer staying in town."

"Take an outing on bank holidays with the cheap trippers? I'll be damned if I do."

"I think you must be a little tired and upset this evening, Mars. I know I am and, if you will excuse me, I think I will go upstairs."

When Grace reached her room she did not turn on the lights, but sat down by the open window to think. It was a very heavy, muggy night and her thoughts were as depressing as the atmosphere.

She had told her husband she would be uncomfortable with Clayton in the house. Was that the word she should have used? Was it not, after all, fear, fear lest she should grow

too fond of him? He had been coming every day to tea and they had had delightful little talks alone—impersonal, to be sure, but, to be honest with herself, her days were beginning to revolve around these visits. Was it possible that she, who had never condoned even mild flirtations for married women, was falling in love?

Aside from the fear of herself, perhaps there was nothing to object to in Clayton and her husband's arranging things so that they could all have a summer on the river. The trouble lay with herself; she must get these silly notions out of her head. She could not go to Marsden and tell him that she was afraid of her own feelings. He would think her a bigger fool than ever. But what should she do? Oh, if he would only be a little more with her. Somehow or other he seemed to be drifting away, out of sympathy and touch. That was why Clayton's visits meant so much to her. Why, when she came to think of it, Marsden had scarcely been at home the last month. They had been together only when Clayton was with them on motor trips or dinner parties.

Could it be that Marsden didn't like Clayton around so much? Yet, how absurd that was, when they had just had an argument over his wanting Clayton to share a house with them this summer. The whole thing was the weaving of her own imagination. Things would perhaps be different if they were on the river. She could be out in the open and would not have so much time for disconcerting self-analysis.

The only thing for her to do was to tell her husband to make whatever plans he thought

would be best. The first duty of a good wife was to follow out her husband's wishes. If one did that, things could not go wrong.

With this point settled, she felt more at ease and her thoughts gradually flitted to the house at Henley. She wondered if Clayton would really like it there and enjoy his tea on the lawn as much as he did in the drawing room here.

Then she thought of Marsden downstairs, hurt and disappointed because she had not been delighted with his good news. He knew how she loved the river and he had come home full of enthusiasm to tell her of the plans. She hurried down, intent upon making it all up to him.

"Mars dear," she began, sitting on the arm of his chair, "I've been thinking over what you told me and I see no reason why we can't all have a happy summer at Henley after all."

"I knew very well, Grace, that the arrangement appealed to you but you could not forego the pleasure of making me feel it would be a sacrifice."

Grace was too hurt to make any further appeal. She walked back to her room, feeling utterly crushed and misunderstood.

V

“Pack up my things, Wilson, I am going down on the Thames for a month or so. You will stay on here and keep the apartment open so that I can run in when I wish to.”

“Very good, sir, I will start at once getting your boxes packed.”

This thing of having a valet to do all the disagreeable part of changing base was as pleasant as it was new to Clayton. He picked up the paper to read, but soon put it down, finding more pleasure in thinking over his own affairs.

The disagreeable memories of the past had ceased to present themselves in his reveries now; the agreeable present had crowded them out. He was finding English life and people delightful. His week-end with the Thurstons was quite the most enjoyable visit he had ever made.

Daniel Thurston was a revelation to him. She was a splendid dynamo of energy and vitality. She seemed to have no trace of purely feminine traits and was without a particle of coquetry, yet he could not help liking her. He understood now what Englishmen meant when they spoke of girls as being good pals. She was certainly of that type. Thurston, too, was a fine chap, cordial and unassuming.

Grace—well—she was an American. Perhaps that was why she seemed to stand out from all the others. None of the women he had seen were half so beautiful or had a fraction

of her wonderful sweetness of character. Grace was certainly his ideal, but then Grace was married. He must not forget that for one moment or all his charming environment would vanish. She was not of that variety of sweetness that would forgive a man's forgetting.

Marsden, he could not make out. He was agreeable to talk to, always ready to go along to any point short of settling the bill; Clayton, however, did not wish him to do that. Marsden was doing his part in supplying the association; there had been nothing in London for him until Marsden had put him up at his Club and opened his house to him. But it was not coming cheaply. Counting the lease, the car and the two loans he had made Marsden, the price was mounting.

When a man who can't live within his income borrows, his creditors must look for re-payment in something besides cash. Well, he was having the time of his life and there was no special reason for counting the cost. Nevertheless, the man who has made his own money can never become insensible to the exact price of any pleasure.

These thoughts led him to remember that he must go to his bank before leaving town and give his address.

"Wilson," he called, "if Mr. Marsden should come while I am out, tell him I have gone to Smith & Harris."

When Clayton returned from Pall Mall, Wilson had everything in readiness for his departure, but Marsden was late, so he sat down to answer the batch of mail he had found at the bank.

At Henley, Grace was working hard with the maids to get the cottage in order by the time the men arrived. Captain Thurston called for her and took her home to his mother's for luncheon, but brought her back immediately after, as he had promised.

She arranged her husband's room herself. He was most fastidious about his things and regarded every luxury that he indulged in as a necessity.

"Poor boy!" she thought, as she put away pile after pile of his linen. "Too bad that I had so little money. He should have married a rich woman."

Her little "nest-egg," as her grandfather had called it, was now entirely gone. Unless Marsden got out of the service into something more remunerative, they would have to alter their mode of living. Clayton had come to England just at the time her money was running out, but he had kept them on the go, dining out and seeing plays—just the things that Mars loved. She wondered if the daily companionship with this man of so much wealth had not added to her husband's discontent at this particular juncture of their lives.

She walked into one of the spare rooms which she was allotting to Clayton, to give it the last finishing touches. Everything looked sweet and dainty. After she had put a vase of freshly picked flowers on the chiffonier, and a few books she thought Clayton might like to read on the table, she felt satisfied with its appearance. It was a pleasure to do things for him; he was so appreciative of every little effort. After all, it would be very nice having two

men to take about with her. Mars was sure to be his old happy self when he got on the river again.

Grace went into her own room to dress before going downstairs. As the men were motoring out, she could not tell at what hour they would arrive. It was past teatime now, but she decided to wait a little longer for them.

The drawing room was cool and inviting in its old-fashioned pink chintz. The slipovers, all fresh that morning, reminded Grace of a lot of prim little girls in starched frocks. She threw a few pillows here and there to relieve the stiffness and rearranged the flowers the maid had placed with exact precision in the vases.

Finally she rang and asked to have the tea brought in. Grace had had it many times by herself, but today it seemed a dreary ordeal. She was overtired and easily succumbed to a fit of depression.

In an effort to change her mood, she opened the piano and struck a few crashing major chords, but gradually her improvising drifted into a plaintive minor melody. She drew out strains which she had never heard before and which stirred up new emotions and filled her with a sense of longing.

Marsden had dropped Clayton at the house before going to the garage, but Grace, unhearing, was not aware of their arrival until she became conscious of a presence and, looking up, saw Clayton standing in the doorway.

"Please don't stop," he cried, "finish the piece."

"I was not playing anything in particular,"

said Grace, rising, "only giving vent to a few of my thoughts, discordant ones, I fear."

"There was nothing inharmonious in the delightful music I have been listening to—but, tell me, how in the world did you get everything shipshape in so short a time?"

"It wasn't much of a task. I was all through by tea, waiting for you, and was disappointed you and Mars were not here."

"You were not more disappointed than I, Grace."

"Where did you stop for tea?"

"Nowhere. It is only the association of the tea table I have grown to miss, not the beverage. Teatime has meant, so far, the privilege of being with you. You will be responsible for my forming a habit that will be most difficult to break."

"What do you think of the place, Clayton?" demanded Mars, coming into the room.

"Great!"

"Wait until you see the grounds in the daytime. I don't believe you have ever seen a more beautiful little garden," Grace added.

"I know it must be lovely."

"Don't let's talk about the garden now—does Clayton know where his room is, Grace? That's the most important thing, we have only a half hour before dinner."

"No, but you may take him up if you will, Mars."

Grace waited a few moments after the men had gone up, before she followed and went into her husband's dressing room.

"Mars," she said, "I feel frightfully upset

tonight, everything seems so unnatural, I can hardly be myself."

"If you have anything to upset you, be specific, name it, don't call it 'everything'."

"Well, I mean everything."

"In that case it is too large an order for me to attempt to adjust. I went to the estate office today to settle for this lease. I could better undertake that half of our bargain that has a fixed sum, so Clayton and I have arranged that you are to let him know what the running expenses amount to."

"I should have preferred having it just the other way. Have I got to take up the question of bills with him?"

"No, put them in an envelope and send them by messenger if the topic offends you; however, I have never seen any hesitancy on your part in discussing them with me."

"Mars, do you see no distinction? Don't you realize how this will make me feel? Is no consideration due me?"

"I never heard of a woman collecting consideration by nagging. I hope you will consider Clayton sufficiently to go and get dressed now and see that our first evening in the house is given a semblance of peacefulness, at least."

Grace hesitated at the door, but feeling the utter hopelessness of further conversation made no answer, and went to her room to dress.

When Clayton joined his host and hostess in the dining room a little later and they were seated at their first meal, he was not aware of the struggle Grace was undergoing. She went through the dinner bravely, but after it was over and the men had walked out on the ter-

race for a smoke, she rushed to her room to give vent to the tears that had all but shown themselves under Clayton's sympathetic scrutiny in the hall. As soon as she was in her room, however, she realized that she could not indulge in the luxury of solitude and tears with a guest in the house. She must make an effort to make this first evening pleasant. How horrible it would be for Clayton if he should feel that she resented his presence. He was not in any way to blame for the situation.

She hurriedly went down to the drawing room and arranged the card table for the three-handed game of bridge her husband enjoyed so much.

VI

The arrangement whereby Clayton defrayed the running expenses of the menage robbed Grace of the feeling of hostess. Should she invite people to dinner and entertain a lot for Edward, or would that expenditure seem indelicate under the circumstances? Every little household duty became a moral issue, and she was wretchedly unhappy, as only a proud and sensitive woman can be.

The plan of Edward's paying the rent had been very distasteful to her, but this later adjustment was almost insupportable. It seemed as if Mars was becoming insensible to everything. He simply could not be made to see how she felt. Every attempt she had made to discuss things with him ended in a row, and the situation remained unaltered. She felt his inaccessibility increase daily. Except on the occasions when she tried to thresh things out with him, he was punctilliously polite—a most successful barrier to intimate discussions.

The little talks with Edward that she used to enjoy so much, were constrained now and embarrassing. She felt placed in a false position, yet did not know on whom to put the blame.

Mars seemed to feel no hesitancy in playing host. He invited people to the house on every occasion, and would suggest her asking people to dine before them so that she was left no alternative. Of course, it was thoughtlessness

on his part, and she marveled at his power to forget how things were. The consciousness of the monetary arrangement was with her at all times.

For several days Grace had refrained from discussing anything with Mars, but on going to her desk to make out her accounts, she found lying on top of her papers a huge bill for wine and whiskey that Mars had ordered put in the cellar. She picked it up and went to him with it.

“What do you wish me to do with this bill?” she asked. “You checked the things off when they came.”

“In that case,” he replied indifferently, “the statement is correct.”

“Here it is then,” Grace said, handing it to him.

“Are you trying to save Clayton from paying for his liquor? I envy him your great consideration.”

“Have you no consideration for me? Are you trying to force me to present this bill to him too. He drinks very little. Surely you should pay for this.”

“What with?” demanded Marsden.

“If you have not the money for such things, don’t order them, Mars.”

“I will order what I damn please. If you had been as careful of my money as you are of Clayton’s, it might not have been necessary to have a paying guest. However, I know you are enjoying his visit in spite of your trying to make it appear to me tragically distasteful.”

“His visiting us would not be distasteful,

but being called upon to present him with the bills of our household is loathsome.”

“Tell Clayton how I abuse you. He is the one to go to for sympathy. Why do you appeal to me when you think I am such a hardened wretch?”

“Mars, I don’t think you are a hardened wretch. I simply feel we are drifting apart, and to such a point that we seem unable to discuss anything or understand each other any more.”

“There are times, Grace, when perhaps it might be just as well not to go too thoroughly into everything and try to understand everyone so perfectly. I prefer drifting, to constantly fighting to stem the tide.”

“But I don’t understand you, Mars. What are you talking about?”

“My dear, I have just been advising you not to try,” he said, getting up and leaving the room.

Grace looked down at her bills. What was she to do? Mars evidently intended her to present the liquor bill to Clayton. Someone would have to pay it. The tradespeople were very insistent upon their accounts being settled at once. She did not care for the added humiliation of their sending representatives to collect. For the first time since she had been married she began to regret not having kept her own money, so that she could be independent.

Hearing Edward enter the drawing room, she tried to gather up her bills to put them out of sight, but in her haste she dropped them. He rushed forward and picked them up for her.

"I guess these are all for me," he said, sticking them in his pocket as he saw her confusion and embarrassment.

"I think one of them is debatable," Grace said.

"Well, I am not going to debate any bills with you," Clayton replied laughingly. "Come on out on the lawn and forget all about your bookkeeping."

Grace was grateful for being spared the necessity of presenting him with the wine bill, but she felt culpable. What must he think of Mars and herself?

She could think of nothing to say to him on the subject that would not belittle Mars more in his sight; and yet, to waft him all the bills without a word, and drift along as Mars said he preferred to, without making any effort to change the course of things, was beyond endurance.

"Edward, do you like entertaining?" she said hesitatingly. "Or would you prefer being just by ourselves?"

"I enjoy being with you, Grace, more than with anyone in the world."

"Oh, I did not mean that, Edward. I mean do you prefer to—to entertain Mars and me alone, or have a lot of people coming to us all the time?"

"I should be dreadfully selfish to want to monopolize all of your time, and bar out your other friends, even though they are not at all necessary to my happiness."

"I mean," said Grace, determined to make herself understood, "don't you find the expenses of this house frightfully heavy?"

"Are you harping about those bills again? What shall I do with you? I asked you to come out to get your mind off of your book-keeping."

"It is impossible for me to get my mind off them. The various items are all mounting up, and you have one statement there for the wine I hardly think fair to add to your responsibilities."

"My dear, I never try to keep an itemized account of life. I just count the cost of an outing, or an experience, without cataloging the minor details."

"But aren't you finding the cost of this experience rather expensive?"

"No, I am not. I am more happy and comfortable than I have ever been in my life. Won't you please stop worrying your little head over my expense account? Come give me another lesson in croquet. I am getting very enthusiastic over the game."

"Didn't you ever play it in America, Edward? I remember seeing it played everywhere when I was a child. It was very much in vogue in Philadelphia then."

"Oh, yes, but I haven't seen anyone play it there for years. We go in for everything so violently that we soon tire. It has been taken up with a vengeance, and dropped as violently many times, but here it seems to be in favor always. Shall I get the balls and mallets?"

"Yes, do," Grace said.

She watched him walk to the house with a heart that had an unsteadily rising pound. Edward's consideration made her feel more inclined to tears that Mars' lack of it. In spite

of her desire not to be swept passively along with the tide, she felt defeated. She was powerless to divert the current in which she was floundering, there was no reef to cling to.

Edward saw she was still worried and preoccupied when he returned, but he made no comment, and entered into the game of croquet with great zest.

VII

On the first of August, Clayton was more than surprised to hear Marsden calmly state he would have to run over to France for a few days, starting the next morning. It was hardly likely his government was sending him on any official business, for he was now on leave.

Marsden's actions were beginning to strike Clayton as very extraordinary. His understanding of their original plan had been that he was to pay for the lease and Marsden run the house, but, on the first of the month, Grace had handed him the house bills with pretty confusion, saying that she had tried to keep them all down and that she hoped he was not weary of his bargain. He gave her a check for the total amount, thinking that she, most likely, had made the mistake and that Marsden would correct it, but the subject was never broached by Marsden—he evidently expected him to pay all the freight.

The lovely home atmosphere was worth every bit it was costing him, but the summing up of Marsden was perplexing. This morning he had hurried out after making his surprising announcement, leaving Grace and himself staring at each other.

"I suppose I shall have to go back to London while he is away," Clayton said at last, with some hesitation.

"I suppose so," repeated Grace, "but I shall miss you both terribly."

"Of course you will miss 'your lord and master,' but I should be immensely flattered if my absence were noticed."

"Then I am afraid I shall be flattering you, Edward. I have never had such a friend," she said, with a smile on her lips and tears rushing to her eyes.

Clayton looked into her eyes without speaking, he had never seen tears glistening there before. What did they mean? Could it be possible that she, too, was dreading the thought of their separation, even for a few days?

Her manner towards Marsden had not changed since the first, even at times when he had been decidedly disagreeable to her. No, the tears belonged to her husband and he was an ass to dream otherwise.

He followed her out on the lawn and together they walked out to the water's edge.

"I have tried to be a friend to you, Grace dear—you need one. None of the little sacrifices of pride that you have made since I have been here, have been lost on me. If I had married you instead of the late Mrs. Clayton, what a different thing life would be."

Grace dropped her eyes and he went on.

"Well, so it goes! The world is made up of round pegs in square holes. I guess you were right—without realizing it—I am looking for a wife, but until I find your counterpart, I shall keep on looking. I hate to think that our delightful days are going to be interrupted."

"I am sorry, too," said Grace.

"What do you say to spending the morning on the water and having luncheon somewhere?"

"It will be lovely! I shall be ready to start

in about half an hour. If you don't object to a cold luncheon we can make a picnic of it."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Clayton, delighted with the idea.

The morning was beautiful. Clayton had grown quite proficient at punting and they sped along toward the lock as another punt started out from the bank in a parallel course. Clayton put on a little extra power in order to reach it first, if possible, and so did his competitor. Just before they reached the lock, whose gates were closing, Clayton gave a tremendous shove and with a sharp crack the pole broke, precipitating him into the river. He disappeared completely from sight, while the other punt shot ahead, its occupants shrieking with laughter.

Grace tried frantically to stop the boat and turn it about, using her hands in the water as paddles. Clayton came up coughing and spluttering from his unexpected plunge. In his effort to clear his lungs, he made no immediate attempt at swimming. Grace mistook this for inability, and in her desperate effort to get the boat to him, tumbled overboard.

Clayton shot towards her with a few powerful strokes and with some difficulty helped her back into the boat, clambering aboard after her.

"Oh, how silly of me!" Grace cried. "I lost my head when I thought you were drowning."

"Silly!" Clayton said, as he tenderly wrapped his dry coat around her shoulders. "I shall never forget the sight of your anxiety on my account." And he took her hand and raised it reverently to his lips.

"I hope you are not going to get cold from this," he said, when he felt her little hand

tremble in his. "I trust my stupidity will do nothing worse than spoil our day."

"Why should it spoil our day?" Grace asked. "It won't take us any time to change after we get home and we will be none the worse for the ducking."

"Well, it is not really so tragic; I see we have another pole here."

The humor of the situation struck them both simultaneously and they returned home, laughing every few moments like two children.

"Experience is a great teacher," Clayton remarked, as they made their second start. "I don't think I'll try racing again, until I become better accustomed to this thing."

He turned down the first back-water and moored the punt under a huge willow tree overhanging the bank.

"This is a delightful spot for lunch," said Grace, enthusiastically.

"Glorious!" Clayton agreed, springing out and offering his hand to her.

Grace spread a cloth on the grass and daintily set out the contents of the basket upon it. Clayton, watching her in admiration, could not refrain from quoting the verse that invariably presents itself, under such circumstances, to lovers of Omar Khayyam:

"A jug of wine, a loaf of bread—and thou
Beside me sitting in the wilderness—
Oh, wilderness were Paradise enow!"

"I am sorry you haven't the book of verse to read beneath the bough," she said smilingly.

"I am well satisfied without it, Grace."

After they had finished their repast Clayton got some cushions from the punt and arranged them against the tree at Grace's back, then stretched himself out on the grass. As she sat there, her flowerlike beauty seemed to hurt him. He felt resentment that she had been transplanted from her native shore; he knew she would have thrived better there.

"Where did you meet Marsden?" he asked abruptly.

"At the home of a schoolmate whom I visited at Christmas. He was her brother's chum, visiting there, too. Why do you ask?"

"I just wondered how you first met. Were you engaged long?"

"No, he was greatly interested in me at once and rather swept me off my feet in his desire to marry me immediately. Having no relatives to consider made it all quite simple. I had only known him about three months and married him at the Easter holidays, sacrificing the end of my term and my graduation to do so."

"And lived happily ever afterwards," added Clayton.

"Of course, but don't you think happiness is a matter of education, Edward? Yesterday we may have thought we were happy, but today teaches us something we did not know and tomorrow's happiness may depend upon some other big 'if.' "

"That is very true. Happiness really lies in the present. Most people have no present, only a future and past, with accent on 'past.' Time gilds it so fantastically that the present is obliterated. My case is just the reverse. I have been living in the future, I believe, until

now. At this moment it is the present that absorbs me, largely because I realize its evanescence. Tomorrow—who knows where we will be?”

“What do you mean, Edward?” asked Grace anxiously. “You do not think of staying away longer than Mars does, do you?”

Clayton was looking off in the distance, trying to get a glimpse of some of the tomorrows that he felt these todays were leading to. Then the thought that had been uppermost in Grace’s mind burst forth.

“Oh, I am frantic at this terrible expense you have been put to here. I am sure, too, that you have lent Mars money, for he could never go about as he has on what he gets and I do not see how he can ever reimburse you. His pay is so small and he is extravagant. He should have married wealth. The whole thing distresses me beyond words. I try not to think of it and to hope you are enjoying it enough to feel repaid. When I count up what you must have spent, I am appalled.

“I know you began with the car. I have asked Mars repeatedly who the friend was who put it in his care for sale, but I am sure it must have been you and you did not care to sell it. This whole arrangement ought to stop. I told Mars so some time ago, but he said it was you who had suggested paying the upkeep of the house if he took the lease again.”

“That arrangement has been perfectly satisfactory to me,” he said.

Grace looked so worried and upset that Clayton could hardly restrain the impulse to take her in his arms and soothe her, but fearful

of the consequences, he merely said, "Grace, dear, if I had not been able to afford it all, I should never have suggested it. Never have I felt more satisfied with my surroundings, nor been so happy. I only consider that it has been a privilege to become a member of the household as I have."

"What a friend you are, Edward, and how easy you make everything."

"How I wish I could make everything easy for you, Grace, dear. I am trying hard to be satisfied with just your friendship and when you asked me a moment ago, how long I was going to stay away, I was wondering how long I ought to stay away in order to get a better hold on myself."

"Do you mean—oh, what do you mean, Edward?"

"I mean that I have discovered what every other man has, that platonic friendship is impossible. If I were sure you were absolutely happy, I would feel that the only thing I could do would be to go away now, but somehow I feel as if you are not happy and I have a right to stand by."

Grace had listened without looking at Clayton. She longed to hear more but dared not.

"We must be getting home, Edward," she said, keeping her eyes averted from his.

He knew by her voice that he had not made her angry and was grateful for that. He felt sure now that Marsden was a cur and he must protect her.

When they came up to their landing, there were two or three other boats tied up and they saw guests waiting on the terrace. Clayton felt

in no mood to meet strangers and told Grace that if she didn't object, he would stay on the river a bit longer.

"Come back in time for tea," she called to him. "I see the Thurstons are there and they won't want to miss you."

"All right," he said, pushing off.

Captain Thurston walked down to meet Grace.

"What have you done to Clayton that he is rushing off in such haste? Dariel and I came over to ask if you three wouldn't dine with us tomorrow night."

"We should love to, but Mars is leaving for France for a few days."

"Then won't you and Clayton come?"

"I don't know what to say about Mr. Clayton, he is planning to go to town for a while."

"Well, try to get him to come, won't you?" he said hurriedly, as they reached the terrace and Grace greeted her other friends.

The hour on the river gave Clayton an opportunity to think. He was in love with Grace—that he was forced to acknowledge. What was his opinion a few months ago of the men who allowed themselves to become infatuated with *his* wife? But then the case in point was so different. She had a husband who loved her and tried to protect her. Grace had a cad, who had evidently married her for what little money she had, most likely thinking it more, and was now, unless he was terribly mistaken, hoping through her, to continue having the luxuries he could not provide.

Grace should divorce him, but divorces were not easily arranged in England. An *affaire de*

coeur, however, did not seem to be looked upon with great disfavor by certain sets. He had discovered that complacent husbands and wives abounded on the British Isles. After all, morality seemed to be a question of geography.

Why was Marsden going away? He had no business interests that could call him even across the street, surely this journey across the channel was for pleasure. Grace was the type, he knew, that would forgive her husband's wanderings, but if she ever realized Mars was trying to make it easier for her to stray, she certainly would not go on living with him. She might close her eyes to Marsden's philandering, but no matter how blind he showed himself to be, she would not be interested in any game that called for the husband being blindfolded. Should he go and perhaps save her the pain of making the same discovery that he had? No, he loved her and if he did not come up to Marsden's expectation, Marsden might bring others around to grow fond of his wife.

When Clayton punted back to Briar Lodge, Marsden had returned. "I have just accepted for you to go to dinner at Mrs. Thurston's tomorrow night," he called out, as Clayton joined them. "It's beastly luck I can't be there," he added.

"The prospect of dining with you is delightful," Clayton said, shaking hands with Dariel, "but I've been thinking I should run up to town for a few days."

"Put it off until I return," Marsden said, slapping him on the back. "I want to feel that Grace will have someone to take her about a bit, when I am gone."

Everyone but Grace joined in to persuade him to stay. Clayton yielded gallantly to their entreaties and when the guests departed it was arranged that he would accompany Grace to the Thurston's the next evening.

VIII

It was five days since Marsden had left and Grace held his first communication in her hand, wondering if it would in any way unravel the tangled mass of perplexities their affairs seemed to be twining into. She had been wretched and upset since he had left, and felt so constrained alone with Clayton that she had urged him to accept the invitations the Thurs-tons had deluged them with, making various excuses for not going herself. She was eager to read the news in the letter, yet was loath to open it for fear it would not put her mind at ease.

The letter merely contained the bald statement that he had retired from the service, and was hoping to turn up something in France that would prove more lucrative, for he could see from her recent attitude that she could not live on the salary of a lieutenant. When Grace finished reading, resentment and sympathy were struggling for the mastery of her emotions. The motherly instinct soon predominated and she was all compassion for the foolish misguided boy; but the only kinship pity has to love is maternal, and when a wife has but that to offer to a husband, she keeps for herself the sorrow of widowhood.

The thought of "what can I do to help him" banished the hope of her being able to go to him for help. Four years ago, when she was a girl so utterly alone, Mars had seemed a man

upon whom she could lean, but now, as a woman, she found no prop there.

Clayton would be back from the Thurstons soon. He had made a point of telling her he would be home for tea. She would tell him about Mars having left the Army. Edward was so resourceful, and even though he had no business opportunity to offer Mars, he could tell him the proper course to follow.

The tooting of a motor horn made Grace look out of the window.

"I came back early to take you for a ride before tea," Clayton called up.

"I shan't keep you waiting a minute," Grace answered, and hurried down, grateful for the chance to tell her news while riding rather than at the tea table. They covered some little ground before she could bring herself to discuss her husband.

"I had a letter from Mars this afternoon," she finally stated.

"Good news, I hope!"

"Rather disconcerting," Grace said with hesitation. "He tells me he has resigned from the Army so that he could go in business as he knew we could not live on a lieutenant's pay."

"What have you been living on up to date?"

"Oh, you see, Grandfather left me one hundred thousand dollars."

"And it is gone in four years with nothing to show for it?"

"We have two years more on the town house lease we bought."

"That is not much to show for a hundred thousand dollars plus a lieutenant's pay. That would mean an average of about thirty thou-

sand dollars a year. Surely you have not lived at that rate."

"We must have, for it is all gone."

"Did you turn the principal over to your husband?"

"He turned the American bonds into cash and deposited it with his bankers."

"Did he draw all the checks against it?"

"Yes, he always wished me to have everything—more than I really wanted. The trouble with Mars is, he is too generous."

"Undoubtedly!"

"In what business do you think he would make a success?"

"Well, if he has to start at thirty thousand dollars a year, I can think of nothing short of printing a private issue of bank notes."

"You think we have been terribly foolish, don't you?"

"I think it criminal in your husband, spending all your money and then giving up his only source of income. However, the real point is not the past but the future. He may have had some good offer which he has not mentioned and which accounts for his trip."

"No, Mars only went away so he could write me what he had done, I feel sure of that. He did not want to run the risk of any discussions. I have been urging him not to resign for the last month."

"That is a very extraordinary proceeding for a man to take."

"Oh, I know, Edward, but compared with you, he seems but a boy."

"Grace, I'm afraid I don't understand even a boy who runs away."

"I know it seems terrible, but he has been so upset lately, he has not been himself."

"In that case, the only thing you can do is to wait until he becomes himself. Don't think about it any more. A woman can't adjust a man's life, no matter how devoted she is to him."

"I am sorry I have bored you with it all."

"The subject is far from boring. It has an alarming aspect, and I am fearful for your future. Your husband is a consumer, not a producer."

"I am not worried for myself, I am not afraid of poverty."

"No, but your husband is not content that you should even attempt to live on a lieutenant's pay. Love in a cottage is not the future he is planning for you."

"What do you think he is planning?"

"God knows, Grace, but I wish I had the right to protect you."

"Protect me from my husband! Don't you think you are talking rather strangely?"

"Grace, don't you think your husband is acting rather strangely?"

"I—I—oh, Edward, I don't know what to think. Please take me home."

Clayton turned around immediately. He drove up to the side door and followed Grace into the drawing room.

"I wonder what you think of us," she said, as she sank wearily on to the sofa.

"I will tell you now what I think of you," he said defiantly, as he walked over to her. Standing in front of her, he continued, "I love you—I love you more than I dreamt I was cap-

able of loving any one, but all your sympathy is for the boy—you call him—that runs away; none for the man who loves you and stays, fighting each day to master himself for your sake. I feel now, though, that I have the right to tell you of my love. If only you could love me, the situation would be simple.”

“I do love you,” said Grace slowly, looking up imploringly into his eyes. “It is that which keeps the situation from being simple.”

“You love me?” cried Clayton, taking her hands in his and drawing her up to him. “You love me?” he asked again, incredulously, looking searchingly into her tear-dimmed eyes.

She swayed and he caught her in his arms. At the contact, his pent-up emotions broke from his control and he crushed her to him with love’s mastery.

Clayton heard the tea wagon being pushed down the hall, and releasing Grace from his embrace, he gently dropped her back into her seat on the sofa. When the maid left, it was he who poured the tea. Grace was too overwhelmed to move. She had never known what love was before and she sat there afraid to look into her lover’s eyes.

“Dearest,” Clayton said, “I promised the Thurstons to bring you back to dine there with me tonight. Shall we go?”

“I will do whatever you wish, Edward,” Grace answered almost inaudibly.

“Will you, dearest?” he asked, and unmindful of the tea he had poured, sat down beside her and took her in his arms.

“Then we will dine out tonight, dear, since you leave the decision to me.”

Clayton had not been so supremely happy in many years—everything was turning out as he desired. Grace was his, or rather, ready to be, and that alone was enough for any man to ask. It was obvious now that she had never really loved Marsden. Her sweet devoted nature needed a worthy person on which to lavish itself. He would be that person. He had always heard and often seen that in every couple one is loving and the other loved. Their love would prove the exception. She was adorable and of the adoring kind. He would do his best to deserve and keep her adoration. It was regrettable that another divorce would have to be manoeuvred before they could enjoy their lives together. With these ideas in mind, he did not pursue Grace with any further mention of his love, beyond an extra tenderness of manner as they drove over to the Thurston home.

Captain Thurston and Dariel greeted them cordially, Dariel taking possession of Clayton at once.

This magnificent girl was most amusing. Without a surface indication of depth of any sort, there was, even with all her boyish swagger, something attractive about her to Clayton. At times he had suspected that all the athletic business was only a pose, arising from her desire to be called a good fellow, while her instincts were really feminine. She seemed to overdo the sports talk somewhat, but she was a new and interesting type, and had he been less absorbed in Grace, a pleasing opportunity for investigation would have been offered.

“How have you two been getting on with Marsden away—not quarreling, I hope?” she

asked as they seated themselves at the table.

"No," replied Clayton, "I can hardly call it that, but you see, I am so intensely American and Grace has become so completely English, that there are many subjects open for debate. Perhaps, after I spend a few years among you, I shall cease to be an alien."

"Years? How lovely! I thought you were only here on a short visit."

"That was my original intention. Home, however, reminds me of work. It seems, I have worked all my life, as I look back over it, and now that I am having a vacation, work does not appeal to me. Until work becomes necessary I may continue to play. We don't find such charming playmates in America, they are all working there; even the women, if they have no interests of their own, they take upon themselves the management of the affairs of their friends. Here you seem too busy with your personal pursuits to worry about those of others. I might stay here years, if they were made attractive for me."

"Weren't they made attractive in America? I should have thought your clever countrywomen could have made time pass pleasantly for you. I have never heard of a charming unattached man being neglected anywhere. We will see that you are not here. You must take up polo."

"I am afraid not. Polo is one of those things that requires an early apprenticeship and exclusive later attention. I have no desire to be mediocre at polo and it is too late now to hope to excel in it. My pleasure will be in watching others, not participating."

"Then you must play tennis or cricket."

"I must take up something strenuous, I see, to interest you at all, but neither one of them appeals very strongly to me."

"I wish I knew something you would enjoy, Mr. Clayton, for we should love to have you stay."

"That is very kind of you. They told me the English people were not friendly toward the Americans, but that has not been my experience."

"I don't think we know the Americans; those we see on shipboard and about the hotels are not like you. If it were not for your accent, I should say you were English. In every other way, you are exactly like us."

"Perhaps you could teach me the accent," replied Clayton gallantly.

"Indeed, I will try. It will come with daily association, you know, and many tête-a-têtes."

"The prospect is alluring. I will subscribe at once for all the sporting magazines, so I will be up on your topics."

"Now you are ragging me. Am I really such a sporting sheet? Mother tells me I should have been a man just because I have been well and strong all my life and lived outdoors, instead of poking around the fire doing fancy work; but, I am a woman all the same, and if the right man comes along, he will find it out and I won't be running around after other men either."

"Bravely said, my dear girl. Stick close to that principle and you will be happy and make some one else happy, too."

Clayton was called upon to verify a state-

ment made by Major Harper, as to the fallacy of the prohibition law in America, and the conversation became general.

Grace was at the other end of the table, receiving all of Captain Thurston's attention but apparently doing very little of the talking.

After dinner, as they strolled out on the lawn, Dariel remained with Clayton, somewhat to his annoyance, as he did not want Grace at such a time to think he was seeking the society of anyone but herself, but there was no escape for him.

"Tell me something about America and your life over there," Dariel asked, when they had seated themselves on a bench.

"Well, I played baseball and football a lot in my early life and did plenty of skating, getting quite proficient in it, both on ice and on rollers. Then I went to work, worked, and here I am."

"Now, you are ragging me again. I was not thinking of your games, but of your life while you were working. How was it you never married?"

"I did, but the trouble was, I backed the wrong horse, that was all. The judge called the race off and I was free to gallop off the matrimonial course."

"Won't you please stop talking horse, too, and treat me seriously? Then you have been married and, I suppose, divorced."

"Yes, and now with your English notions about divorce, I imagine I am ready for the discard and my accent will not be corrected."

"Of course it is too bad, and I dare say you have suffered a lot in getting where you are, but it does not change you any. Will you come

over tomorrow for your first lesson in 'English as she is spoke'?"

Clayton hesitated—it was the very last thing he wanted to do. Yet, mixing with their friends was the only way to keep the women's tongues off Grace and himself. If he were to plead a town engagement she might run over to see Grace—to say he would try, would leave him worse off than ever.

Noting his hesitation, Dariel said, "Perhaps you don't care to begin so soon. Come whenever you feel inclined, I shall look forward to broadening out some of your a's."

"I am not certain about tomorrow, but you may be sure of seeing me at the first opportunity."

Mrs. Thurston was anxious to have some music to entertain her guests and called Dariel to accompany Mrs. Torrence. Clayton walked up to the house with Dariel but asked for the privilege of listening to the singing from the terrace. He remained alone, walking up and down thinking, until Grace sent word to him that she was ready to go home. He went into the house, eager to make his adieux. The evening had seemed interminable.

Once out of the Thurston's grounds, Clayton let the car out. Speeding along in silence, Grace had the feeling of rushing through space into the unknown, but Clayton was steering their wheel of destiny and love was his compass, so she would not be fearful. A flirtation would have filled her with shame, but as she sat there beside the man she had idealized from a child, she thought so great and wonderful a thing as his devotion must be a gift from heaven to

compensate her for the twenty-four years she had existed without love.

“Don’t bother to run me to the house first,” Grace said, as they neared the cottage. “I will enjoy the little walk with you from the garage.”

Clayton lifted Grace out of the automobile and cradled her arm in his, so as to help her over any of the little rough places on the road. How glorious it seemed to her, even on a little stroll, to feel secure in his protection.

Clayton opened the door with his latch key. The house was in darkness save for a little electric lantern hanging above their heads, but standing under its opaque light, the glow was sufficient for each to read in the other’s eyes a love too powerful and compelling to be denied.

IX

“Please don’t look so sad, dearest,” said Clayton, as he and Grace walked out on the lawn after luncheon. “You will make me feel like a brute, if my love is going to make you unhappy.”

“I am not sad or unhappy, dear, but the thought of Mars does make me wretched. What am I to say to him? He has his faults, but he is not to blame for my loving you. When he returns he will expect to find his home and his wife the same as when he left.”

“I am not so sure of that.”

“Then you think he knew I loved you?”

“I don’t know what he knew, dear, but to put your mind at rest about him, I will tell you a few things he did. He has not contributed one cent toward the home you think he expects to find the same. I paid for the lease, which was to have been my share and then he evidently made you think that I was to pay the upkeep, too, and had you present the bills to me. He got the money from me to purchase his automobile and has borrowed sizable sums from me on various occasions since—for what, I don’t know. Then he goes off and leaves his wife, whom you think he expects to find the same, alone with the man he knows must love her. I would not have told you this, my darling, if you did not belong to me, but I want you to see what kind of a cad it is you are worrying about. I would give anything in the world to spare you this ordeal, but

there is no way out of it. If I took you away now, it would just make a scandal and a mess of your life—you will have to get Marsden to let you divorce him.”

“Edward,” asked Grace, with a tragic look on her face. “Has our experience been the obvious thing because we were left alone in a house? Don’t tell me the man to whom I have been a wife foresaw the course of events. I thought your love and mine was sanctified, but now it seems degraded.”

“Don’t say such things,” replied Clayton sternly. “The course of human nature is very much the same under similar circumstances, but the plane upon which love stands is raised or lowered by one’s exalted or debased ideas. The fact that your husband may have been counting on an intrigue does not rob our love of any of its sacredness.”

“When I am with you, Edward, you make me see things, as I should, and I soar to idealistic heights; but, when I am left alone with my own thoughts, the elevation is not so great.”

“Dearest, it is a trying situation just now to a noble, sensitive woman like you, but if you are just a little patient, I know it won’t be long before we can get things on a normal basis.”

“I wonder if even divorce will exonerate me in my own eyes?”

“Come, stop trying to make yourself miserable, dear. Let’s take a run over to see some of your friends.”

“The Thurstons? We usually decide to go there.”

Grace walked back to the house to get her

hat. She was standing in the door waiting for Clayton to drive up when a messenger boy handed her a telegram.

Grace read:

“Paris, France

Send me a hundred pounds at once am
here stranded

Mars”

Where was she to get a hundred pounds? He knew she was penniless. This was another demand upon Clayton. How horrible! Must she take up the question of money with Edward again?

“What’s wrong?” Clayton asked. “Did the messenger bring more upsetting news?”

“This is what he brought,” Grace replied, handing him the message.

“Nothing very terrific in this,” he replied, putting the telegram in his pocket. “I will go to town in the morning and attend to it; and, now, to please me, don’t let us discuss this man any more today.”

Grace responded with a pathetic little smile and got in beside Clayton, struggling hard for self-possession, that she might appear undisturbed by the time they reached their destination.

For three days Grace was in a state of unrest. Hundreds of perplexing questions presented themselves to her mind. She knew Clayton had telegraphed Mars money and now all she could do was wait until he returned and hear what he had to say. Grace was sitting in her room going over the same treadmill of thoughts, when Marsden walked in.

"You don't look pleased to see me," he said, as Grace rose slowly with every vestige of color leaving her face at his appearance. "I am sorry I had to telegraph you for the money to get back, but the fact is, I am a beaten man. Everything I have done, or tried to do, lately, has gone wrong and I am in despair. I tried to kill myself last night but I hadn't the nerve to carry it out. I'm tired of everything."

"Are you ill?" asked Grace, moved to concern by his talk of suicide.

"Not the illness that needs an ice-bag or mustard-plaster, but commonsense understanding."

His flippant answer showed her that her alarm was unnecessary.

"What made you resign from the service?" she asked.

"I didn't. I got leave for two weeks, thinking I would land a berth I heard of in Paris, and was so sure of it I wrote you from there that I had resigned, as I had intended to on my return. It fell through."

"I don't believe you. You went to Paris with some other motive or some other woman. It doesn't matter which. I don't ask you to tell me the truth about anything except whether you are still in or out of the service. Which is it?"

"I have not resigned, and if you doubt my word, you can investigate for yourself."

"Did it occur to you, while away, what an embarrassing position you had left me in and how little you improved it by wiring for money? You knew that Mr. Clayton was the only one of whom I could ask it. How long do you expect his respect for either of us will last at this

rate? You will drive him away by such methods."

"There isn't any danger of driving him away. Any fool can see he is madly in love with you—and I'm not quite a fool."

"Then you deliberately went away and left me alone with him and wired me to get money from him for you to spend. I am just learning that instead of marrying an English gentleman, I married an Apache. Go to your other women, or anything you want—I am through with you forever. I shall divorce you, as soon as possible."

"On what grounds?" answered Marsden.

Grace was silent. Her first rage had spent itself and, with returning reason, she could see that, despicable as his actions had been, she had no proof of anything that would procure a divorce.

"Now, be sensible, Grace. You know very well that I could not permit a divorce, even if I wanted it, because it would necessitate my leaving the service and I am about convinced it is the only thing between me and starvation. I know very well Clayton is in love with you and you are in love with him. What you may or may not have done while I was away does not interest me. We will go right along as we have, and no one will be the wiser. I will not stand in your way and will keep out of sight all I can. You can have your lover and the luxuries he can provide and the protection of a husband. I don't see that you need make any explanations to Clayton at all. He is paying the bills and can keep on doing so. I don't imagine he ever gets the worst of a bargain."

Listening to this appalling proposition, Grace's indignation rose as he went along, but, when he had finished, she was without words. She, herself, at this moment, was the guilty one and her lover was in the house. What right had she to condemn? But the proposition was horrible. How could she sit at the table with these two men—the past and the present—and what would Edward think of her? Which way could she turn? One thing was certain, she could never turn back. It was too late for that. Never again could she be a wife to Marsden.

Marsden had waited for her to speak, but, as she did not, he began again, "What is the use of struggling, Grace? We have played our game together and lost. We spent our money and enjoyed it while it lasted. Now it is gone and we face poverty with all its hideous aspects, and our only escape is this one. I say 'we,' for I don't intend that you shall be able to discard me and have all the luxury. If you want them and your lover, you will have to put up with my sharing a little of the prosperity. I don't say this arrangement is ideal, but it is the best I can suggest. You took me for what I am. You can now help me off this shoal we are stranded on, even if it is distasteful to you. There are many worse things you can get into by refusing."

"Leave me," she cried, unable to listen to him any longer.

Marsden went downstairs and in a few moments she saw him pushing off in the punt. She rushed out of her room to find Clayton. His door was slightly ajar and she went in.

Clayton walked toward her with outstretched arms.

“What did he say? Is he ready to give you the divorce? I saw him leaving the house just as I came in.”

“He hasn’t left the army after all, and he will not permit a divorce, for it would mean his dismissal and he has no other means of support.”

“What do you care for that?” broke in Clayton. “He has forfeited all claims on you.”

“I know he has, dear, but how can I get a divorce, if he won’t give it to me?”

“There must be some way—what does he propose?”

“He doesn’t propose anything. Even after I told him I would never be a wife to him again, he said things could run on as they were.”

“What does he think you are to me?”

“Oh! I don’t know what he thinks, but I made him realize I knew what he was at last, and I suppose he must know that we have talked him over. This sudden change could only mean that, or—or—”

“Don’t worry, sweetheart, it’s all awful, I know, but everything is bound to come out all right in the end. I can’t take you away with me now, but I shall soon be able to; in the meantime, one thing is certain, I am not going to leave you here alone with that cad. I will go thoroughly into the question of divorce here and I know I shall find some way to free you from him. When I get around to talking to him myself, a price can be set for this commission of his.”

Two hours later Marsden returned with his

boat and another filled with young people he had brought back to tea. Clayton was standing on the lawn when they landed and at the sight of the gay coterie Marsden had collected, he was forced to add "finesse" to the inventory which he had just been taking of Marsden's qualities. Clayton joined the party, grateful for their presence at his first meeting with Marsden.

Grace came out to meet her friends and was soon presiding graciously over the tea table with both Marsden and Clayton assisting in serving her guests.

Marsden was delighted with the performance. He had provided the setting of guests to allow Grace and Clayton to drift naturally into the parts he had assigned them. The young people stayed on until very late and when they left, Grace, Clayton and Marsden were talking as if nothing unwonted had occurred.

At dinner, Marsden, with the assistance of several whiskies-and-sodas, was especially entertaining with the accounts of his trip and Paris gossip. He had quite a fund of amusing and interesting anecdotes, and it was evident that he had not given his exclusive attention to business during his sojourn.

When the meal was finished, Marsden did not invite Clayton to join him in a cigar on the terrace as usual, but announced his intention of going over to the Drayton's home for a game of billiards. Left alone, Grace and Clayton stood looking at each other in despairing incredulity.

"What a tragic comedy we are in!" she sighed. "I feel as if I should go mad," she

continued more vehemently, "unless a climax is reached soon."

"I felt as if I were verging on insanity, myself, dearest, as we three sat down to dinner, but we must either play the game as he wants it for awhile, or have a big row that will get us nowhere but in disgrace, if he wishes to be nasty. If it were not for that, I would take you away from here tonight. In order to be together now, dear, we will have to put up with things as they are, but I hope my being near you will compensate for some of the trying ordeals."

"I was not thinking of my compensation, but of yours. Can you be happy here, under the circumstances?"

"Happier than if not being able to see you, dear."

X

Grace felt life's dissonances were crashing around her, emotional and stirring, but not resolving into harmonious melody. Since Marsden's return, there had been a mad whirl of gaieties, and of late, Clayton seemed as anxious as Marsden to keep on the go.

This morning, Clayton's new automobile had arrived and immediately a run down to Brighton was planned. As Grace hurriedly packed her bag for the impromptu trip, she heard the two men in their rooms on either side of her, slamming things around. Somehow the noise, coming from both rooms at the same time, jarred her nerves, and her mind began racing over the events of the last fortnight.

Marsden had ceased being disagreeable and fault-finding and was most affable and punctiliously polite. He had avoided a private interview since the one on his arrival. She wondered, if ever they did talk personalities again, what they would have to say to each other.

Clayton was as devoted and considerate as a man could be—but her peace of mind was gone. This great love, impelling and overwhelming as it was, could not drown the discordant strains that kept pounding in her brain. She continued her packing with renewed energy, eager to join Clayton and be off. When Grace went downstairs, both motors were at the door, Marsden had suggested taking the two—he to pilot the way in his.

By Clayton's side, Grace gradually glided out of her despondency into a happier mood. When they reached Brighton she appeared as ready as the others to enjoy its diversions. Marsden attended to getting their rooms and they considered themselves lucky to get into the Metropole without having had reservations.

They spent the remainder of the day walking with the crowd on the esplanade. The three dined together and afterwards listened to the orchestra, where the guests all gathered, monde and demimonde, indistinguishable except for their reputations.

Marsden was able to sketch the history of those whose lives stood out in bold relief and the illuminating sidelights lent color to the scene. After he had thrown the spotlight on all the celebrities, Marsden felt he had contributed all he could to Clayton's entertainment, and left to join some officers he had run into down there.

"This is a delightful little change, isn't it, Grace, dear?" Clayton asked.

"Yes, Brighton is a most amusing place, but I don't believe I should like to be near the ocean. In spite of the music and the mingling of gay voices and laughter, I am conscious of its roar and saddened by it."

"Sad when you are with me? I feel hurt."

"Not sad," Grace hurriedly explained, "but oppressed."

"I thought you liked living by the water."

"I do when it is tranquil, but the surging ocean with its waves incessantly breaking on the shore makes me feel afraid and beaten."

"Aren't these disquieting thoughts some-

thing new, Grace? I was going to suggest taking a stroll, but if the ocean affects you that way, we had better not go any nearer to it."

"Oh, do let's go! It is a glorious night for a walk. I am ashamed of myself for giving voice to such silly fantasies."

Clayton regarded her thoughtfully for a while before he answered.

"Dearest, you are both sad and depressed, but it is not the ocean that makes you so. What you describe is the effect of the ocean on an unhappy woman. Come, let us go for a walk. We must thrash things out, dear."

"I shall enjoy the walk," Grace said, rising. "but please don't think of me any more as unhappy."

They walked in silence for a little while, then Clayton drew her over to the balustrade to watch the ocean.

"It makes me feel tempestuous, too, tonight, sweetheart, and I shall not be at rest again until we get things adjusted. I must talk with Marsden, myself, tomorrow, and have an understanding. We cannot go on with this '*menage a trois*' another day. He must give you grounds for divorce at once, and I will pay him whatever his price is. You can live in some hotel until the divorce is granted, but there must not be a breath of scandal about you."

"Oh, I do not care about the world's condemnation. It would be easy to endure compared to the approbation of Archibald Marsden. I don't want you to bargain for me with him. Take me away and grant me the pleasure of giving myself to you. I can't return to Briar Lodge or to any place he has a right to enter."

“You had better move to the Carleton tomorrow then, dear, but I will not have you with me until you can come as my wife. Perhaps a decisive step like this is the only thing that will bring Marsden to a realization that he can’t get any more money out of me ’til he gives you your freedom. I fear though, that if you leave now, your friends will attribute the whole thing to our friendship and there will be a scandal about you.”

“Oh, I know everybody will be only too ready to condemn, but what do we care for what they say?”

“I care more for your reputation than anything else, dear. I want you for my wife and the mother of my children.”

After a moment’s hesitation, Grace asked tremulously, “Then, regardless of what I have said tonight, what would you think the best thing to do?”

“Why, dearest, if we could stand it, to stay at Briar Cottage as we are, until he gives you the grounds for divorce, then you could leave him at once; but, of course, as long as you stay there, I will remain. I will never leave you alone with that cur.”

“Then let us do it, dear, and I promise not to worry you again about the situation.”

“No, Grace, I am afraid you can’t go on as we are and be happy.”

“Yes, I can. I see it all clearly now, and, I assure you, dear, I won’t let anything make me despondent again. We will wait until he sees he must do what you wish.”

Clayton did not answer for some time. Every instinct of his nature revolted at their

being placed in a position that necessitated association with Marsden, but if he and Grace were ever to have a happy married life, things must be adjusted so that her actions would not be subjected to criticism. He loathed publicity and notoriety. He had fled from America on account of it and it looked as if, unless the utmost caution were exerted, he would be figuring in a much more complicated and sensational scandal in England.

"Please, please, say we will let matters wait a while until things straighten themselves," Grace pleaded again.

"If you assure me you will not be wretched, dearest. At the moment, it does seem hard to know which way to move."

"I give you my sacred word of honor that I won't allow myself to be wretched. I don't see how I ever drifted into such a melancholy state, having you with me and doing everything in your power for my happiness."

"Very well, dear, then we will make the best of things as they are, and try to forget the existence of Marsden. To give the beggar his due, he certainly does not inflict his society on us any more than is necessary for all concerned."

With her fears allayed, Grace was again animated by love and sustained by hope.

"Dearest," she whispered, as she placed her hand upon his arm, "will you forgive me for casting a cloud over this evening?"

"Forgive you, sweetheart?" he echoed, drawing her hand through his arm, "I think, now that the mist has disappeared, we will find the night more beautiful." Moving away from the

balustrade and contemplation of the restless ocean, they became once more the placid lovers only conscious of the present and the joy of being together.

As Marsden had not considered it necessary to guide Clayton and Grace back Monday morning, he had motored up to town early, leaving them to make the trip home whenever they felt like it. They decided not to start until after luncheon and, after a happy morning together, enjoyed their journey back. Without Marsden constantly on their horizon, they were not reminded, as they had been coming down, of ignominiously having to play "Follow the Leader."

Grace was a little fatigued after the trip and at Clayton's suggestion retired early. He had decided to have his talk with Marsden as soon as he returned home. He walked up and down the drawing room floor, going over the proposition he intended making Marsden and trying to anticipate the objections he might possibly offer. In spite of what Grace had repeated of her conversation with her husband, he had no misgivings as to the ultimate success of being able to buy him off.

His paces soon ceased with the completion of his arguments. He stretched himself slowly and sat down to finish his cigar over the final pages of a novel. It grew late. Marsden had not yet put in an appearance and Clayton, yawning lazily, threw down his book. There was no use waiting any longer, Marsden was probably out having a gay time. He wrote a note, which he slipped under Marsden's door,

asking him not to leave for town in the morning without seeing him.

Grace did not come down to breakfast the next morning. The two men ate in almost unbroken silence and when they had finished, Clayton asked Marsden to step out on the terrace with him. As soon as they were far enough from the house not to be overheard, Clayton opened the conversation.

"I have had some news from New York that makes me think seriously of going back there soon and, perhaps, to stay quite a while. It is never possible to have one's business run by others. I am afraid it is time I stopped spending money and began to make some more. This has been a delightful vacation, and you have both made it memorable. What can I do for you before I go?"

Marsden's face had taken on a look of great anxiety, as Clayton went on, but he made no effort to interrupt him and was at a loss for words when he had finished.

It was a moment or two before he replied falteringly. "You have certainly helped us along very much, and I appreciate it. This is rather a sudden decision, isn't it?"

"I haven't decided finally yet, but if my communications continue to be disturbing, there will be nothing for me to do but to go."

"What does Grace think about it?"

"I have not told her," replied Clayton abruptly. "But I am speaking to you of it because there are obligations here which, in my absence, you would have to attend to, and I want to give you all the notice possible. How would you suggest adjusting them?"

Marsden thought hard. Could Clayton and Grace have quarreled on their way home the day before? Grace was not down to breakfast, which was rather unusual—or, was this some deep plan of Clayton's, perhaps to take Grace with him? He did not credit the business requirements at all, though he had to admit Clayton had certainly spent money freely.

Scrutinizing Clayton closely, he asked, "Are you returning to New York alone?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Clayton.

"Oh, I thought perhaps this was a preface to inviting Grace and myself to go over with you. We would be charmed, if it were possible for me to get away, but I am afraid it is not."

"No, I had not considered that. The fact is, I find myself taking entirely too much interest in Mrs. Marsden for my own peace of mind—and, possibly, hers as well. I think a change of environment with some hard work would be good for me."

"Grace has not complained to me in any way of your attentions—I think you exaggerate the situation."

"You know I am not exaggerating it, Marsden. I am in love with her; and, as she is your wife, the only thing for me to do is to leave."

"Have you just discovered this?" asked Marsden, coolly.

"Quite recently."

"What does Grace think of your going?"

"Perhaps you had better ask her. I did not seek this interview to discuss her, but to discuss your future."

"My future is inextricably associated with hers."

“Inextricably?”

“Practically so. Even if Grace returns your affection, divorce over here is too difficult for consideration, and, moreover, I don’t want one—my position would not permit it. Any scandal would terminate it.”

“Your suggestion of a moment ago is worth consideration in part. Under what conditions would you permit Mrs. Marsden to accompany me? or, to be plain, what would be your price for her freedom? Everything seems to have its price now.”

“I would have to have time to consider it. The effect would be far-reaching and it requires much thought. I do not say it cannot be arranged, but I must live; and with my present source of income cut off, the future would have to be carefully planned out and provided for. In the meantime, why not postpone this whole matter until the end of the summer, which is not very far off?”

“Do I understand you to imply that at the end of the summer, for a consideration that we could agree on, you would consent to give Mrs. Marsden grounds for a divorce?”

“Yes, and if we cannot agree on the terms we will be just where we are now, with no one any wiser and no unpleasantness.”

“And, in the meantime?”

“Improve your opportunity to impress Grace with the advisability of a change of partners. You imply that she has not quite decided that point yet.”

Marsden’s cool impudence was hard for Clayton to stand, but he realized he could get nowhere by a quarrel—there was but one course

to pursue—he must meet him on whatever grounds he took.

“Very well, Marsden, I will endeavor to postpone my return long enough to permit you to calculate your damages correctly. You have no idea yet, I suppose, what figure would be interesting.”

There was something about Clayton which had always impressed Marsden that he had an absolute limit to every game he played. While appearing to be indifferent to expense, he felt he would sacrifice anything or any one rather than exceed that limit.

Grace had always been an asset, he had spent her fortune but he knew her beauty would not fail to attract for many years. Yet, with all her sweetness, she was not a pawn, he would have to take her into consideration. She was in love with Clayton, that he knew very well. Should he strike too high and Clayton take her away, or, as was barely possible, actually leave her, he might be some time in planting Clayton's successor on his hearth. Just what figure to ask was difficult to decide, but it was obvious he would have to name one.

“I suppose ten thousand pounds would see me safely started in some new field,” he said, watching Clayton's face closely to note the effect.

There was not the slightest indication, however, what the effect was.

“Assuming that some such figure could be agreed on, how would you wish it to be paid?”

“There would be the rub. In so important a matter as my whole future, I could not afford to take any chances; and I also realize that you

would not care to either. It would have to be arranged in some way mutually satisfactory. I suppose a certain amount down, evidencing good faith and the balance in escrow would cover it; but the escrow would defeat the divorce if discovered. The King's Proctor looks into all divorces and collusion is not possible here."

"Well, Marsden, I suppose we can call that fairly satisfactory, although it is beyond what I expected you to ask."

"Done," replied Marsden, "and now, what would you say to five hundred pounds on account. I am stony broke and really need it."

"How do you propose to supply the grounds for divorce?" replied Clayton, ignoring the question.

"I know a girl in Paris who would come over here and play the part for a proper cash insult, but she would want plenty in advance and some little attention, now and then, to keep her in line. Those French women are always open for financial engagements and something else might offer itself if she is neglected. That is one reason why I need money now. I can assure you the Francaise is ideal."

"She does sound promising. I think, however, I will sleep over the whole question before going further. Five hundred pounds is rather a heavy draft at this early stage of the proceedings. I don't mind a hundred pounds, occasionally, but for anything beyond that, I should want something in black and white."

"Nothing can be signed up over here on such matters, it is a gentleman's agreement."

Clayton would have given the five hundred

pounds gladly, for the pleasure of telling Marsden that such a thing with him would be impossible, but let it pass.

“You need have no fear,” added Marsden, “my word is good and I really need the money desperately.”

“I will give you my check when we return to the house—and, by the way, what is the name of this fair Parisian?” asked Clayton.

“We will call her Mademoiselle de Convenience,” retorted Marsden with a smile, as he led the way to the cottage.

XI

Time was passing very quickly and almost happily for Grace since their return from Brighton. The future seemed at last to have been given some definite shape. She realized what they had outlined was in the dim distance, but she no longer felt like a lost mariner on life's sea; there was now a beacon light.

It would take time, of course, to obtain the divorce, but the glorious anticipation of returning to America as the wife of Edward Clayton would help her through the trying intervening days.

She and Clayton had just been drawing plans for their structure of happiness, and she was living in her palace of dreams, as Clayton rowed her down the river. Nearing the Thurston's brought her back to the present. It had been some time since they had seen any of them for she and Clayton had been so absorbed in each other that they had neglected all their friends of late.

"Edward, dear, what would you think of running in on the Thurstons?" she asked. "I am afraid they will be offended if we stay away much longer."

"I was just looking forward to having tea in our own little niche, dear, but I think we should stop."

The family was out on the lawn and when they saw Grace and Clayton land, Dariel and her brother walked down to greet them. The

four went back together to Mrs. Thurston. Tea over, Captain Thurston took possession of Grace, and Dariel strolled off with Clayton.

"Where have you been this long time?" she asked him. "Walking to and fro on the earth seeking whom you may devour?"

"Do I look so fed up as all that?"

"Well, you look as if you had been pretty well taken care of. That is the trouble with all the men—the married women give us poor girls no chance."

"That is too bad. Now, the moment I see an opportunity, I shall come over and occupy a vacant stall in your paddock and be sure of your constant attention."

"Do! I'll see that you get your morning exercise and are kept fit, though I am afraid you are too fond of your present quarters to stay long. I should expect you to bolt for home promptly."

"I must admit, Grace and Marsden have done everything in their power to make my visit pleasant."

"You have made quite a visit."

"Yes," replied Clayton looking up at her quickly. "The fact is, I have found the association so delightful and the home atmosphere so pleasing after the hotels that, perhaps, I have stayed too long—do you think so?"

"If Marsden doesn't think so, why should I?"

"Why do you mention him only?"

"Because I know no woman could help being enchanted with your companionship, though it might inspire jealousy in a husband."

"You surely don't imagine any one could

hope to supplant him in the affections of so devoted a wife?"

"She has always been a devoted wife," said Dariel, slowly, "but Marsden is not a very attractive man—you are, and the daily comparison would, I think, have its effect. I can only judge by myself. If I were thrown into daily contact with you both, I should not prefer Marsden."

"But you forget, she has already preferred Marsden to half the population of the globe."

"Oh, I see—or rather, I don't see. She had probably met about six men and he was nearest the pole."

"The field may have been small but with such a prize, the running was undoubtedly good. But let us change the subject—we are not minding our own business."

"Yes, we are—your business, and I am venturing to do so to your face. That is much better than behind your back as others are doing."

"Are they really?" asked Clayton seriously. "I should never forgive myself if I had unintentionally subjected Mrs. Marsden to criticism. What can they say—what do they say?"

"You see, Grace is very charming and pretty. You are constantly together and Marsden is away a lot. I suppose his absences are unavoidable, but it is difficult to imagine any man in the constant society of such an attractive woman not becoming enamoured. It is only a question of time when you will win in a canter or be dropped at the flag. Isn't that enough to interest the judges?"

"Probably—what are the odds at present?"

"Ten to one on St. Anthony."

Clayton roared, in spite of his growing consternation.

"That is the best thing I have ever heard—in a country, too, where they are supposed to have no sense of humor."

"Don't judge them all by Marsden, he assuredly has no sense of humor to leave his wife in such fast company."

"Fast? I don't like that word. I thought they canonized Anthony because he was the only man on record who could not be tempted by a beautiful woman. You can't call a man that, and fast with the same breath. It makes him nervous."

"I did not use the word in that sense. The sight of me seems to inspire you to talk horse and I was following your lead in using the vernacular of the track. But, seriously, you and Grace have been constantly together all summer, with Marsden only conspicuous by his frequent absences. Do you imagine people think you are discussing politics with his wife? Can you blame them for speculating on what you do talk about? Surely you are furnishing all the ingredients for a shilling shocker."

"You make a strong case. I had no idea I was affording the community so much material for conjecture and conversation. I suppose it is time I was suddenly called to America on important business, so as to permit the life on the Thames to resume its normal course."

"Now you are angry and I am sorry. Mother says I can never hold my tongue long enough to be popular. Please forgive me," she said, lay-

ing her hand on his arm, "I won't offend you again."

"My dear child, you have not offended me at all—only surprised me. We had a famous wit in America who said that if a person's character were being assailed, fifteen thousand people heard of it before the one under discussion, and his own number was fourteen thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine. That is evidently mine, too. Do people really say disagreeable things, or are they only interested?"

"I think 'interested' describes it. I hope you won't run away because of anything I have said. We have all been looking forward to seeing something of you in London. Horace has really become very fond of you."

"That is very nice. I find myself using Thurston as a basis of comparison for the other men I meet. I have never met a more likable and admirable man."

After his last remark Clayton lapsed into silence—a silence that made Dariel feel very ill at ease, fearing, after all, her effort to give him an idea of what was being said, had offended him.

"Shall we rejoin the others?" she asked. "I am sure I have wearied you with my conversation."

"Indeed you haven't, Miss Dariel. Can't we sit down here—I want to talk to you."

Dariel led the way to a bench under a tree, delighted to prolong his chat with her. She sat down and waited curiously while Clayton, sitting beside her, threw pebbles into the water.

"See what a tremendous disturbance a little

pebble makes," he said, as they watched the circles forming in the water.

"Yes, but you see how quickly the surface is again smooth," replied Dariel.

"But not until the pebble has disappeared," Clayton retorted.

After tossing a few more pebbles impatiently into the water, he turned to Dariel and said, "I was alone over here and pathetically lonely, when the Marsdens opened their home to me and gave me the opportunity of meeting their friends, including yourselves. The net result has been an ideal vacation. I have a keen sense of gratitude. Now, from your English point of vantage, tell me exactly how I should show my appreciation of their great hospitality."

"By staying on with them as long as they will have you, regardless of what any one says, but at the same time, showing enough interest in the other women to keep their minds pleasantly occupied."

"Good, Miss Solomon, that has the right sound, and I shall begin at once by a study of yourself. I began by regarding you as the sporting page of my daily journal, but I am surprised and charmed to see that you handle the social column with even superior ability. If you have not already had it, a short course in domestic science would leave nothing in the way of accomplishments to be desired, but to be a perfect woman you would have to demonstrate your ability to love hard and well. Have you given that subject any thought?"

"I think you had better confine your attention to the sporting page. This conversation is getting too personal."

“Can you think of any conversation as interesting as a personal one?”

“No, I can’t, but it is dangerous, and my sympathy is fast going out to poor Grace. I am certain now that you don’t talk politics.”

“I thought my staying here depended on allowing Mrs. Marsden a respite and taking some interest in other women! You don’t seem to enjoy my doing it.”

“Yes, I do—perhaps too much, but I am not going to turn myself inside out for your amusement. I have had the domestic science course, although I hate it; but as for the other, that is not under discussion.”

“You mean that experience has taught you to approach it with caution?”

“You bait your traps well. I have no experience, but I have my ideas.”

“Twenty, and no experiences? That won’t do.”

“Twenty-two—and it will have to do, because it is true.”

“A woman who gets past twenty without being in love is supposed to be incapable of it.”

“Not over here, though they say that in America boys and girls play at it openly. A sort of forcing process that would not be tolerated here. Girls here are kept close until they are old enough to know what they want.”

“Have you found that out yet?”

“Perhaps I know, but I won’t tell! And now, Mr. Curiosity, shall we join the others? You have made an excellent beginning and I am quite sure you will have no difficulty with any of the ladies.”

Both Clayton and Grace appeared a bit op-

pressed by their call and not inclined to an interchange of thoughts until they had rowed half way home.

"Edward, did you notice anything in Mrs. Thurston's manner when we arrived?" Grace asked, unable to keep from speaking of it any longer.

Clayton had not considered Mrs. Thurston and could only answer, "No."

"She was frigidly polite to me at first, but thawed out a little when she saw you so occupied with Dariel. She has always been so lovely to me, I can't understand it."

"You said they would feel hurt if we neglected them, I dare say that is it."

"Perhaps that is the reason. We must have them to dinner soon, but it can only be when Mars is here. He is away altogether too much lately for our own good."

"Are you missing him?"

Grace's eyes filled with tears.

"That is the first cruel thing you have said to me," she faltered.

"Forgive me, dearest, it was intended as a joke, but that is not a subject between us to jest about. Forget it, sweetheart. If we were in a less public place, I should kiss away those tears right now." Grace smiled her forgiveness. "That Thurston girl is cleverer than I thought. She undertook to tease me quite a lot about you and our roaming about together in Marsden's absence. It may be that while in this community, it would pay to do some camouflaging. What do you think?"

"Oh, I suppose the women talk a lot—they always do. It is too bad we can't be let alone,

but no one ever is. Whatever you think will be best—I am sure.”

“It probably narrows down to one of two things—never to be seen outside the house alone or my rushing some of the other women. Between the two, there is no choice; I am not interested in other women. What do you know of your maids? They mix with the others, some, of course.”

“Yes, there is no way of stopping that, they have so little in their own lives that our doings become theirs. But I hardly think they have seen anything to start them gossiping. If you think we are being talked about, it must come from the outside, but I am surprised at Dariel. I did not think the catty chit-chat of women appealed to her.”

“It probably doesn’t, but she echoes the family opinion. I think her teasing me was to give us a little inkling of what is being said. How soon do you think we can go back to London without exciting comment?”

“In three or four weeks. Every one will be going to town then.”

“I shall be glad. It is lovely here, but today’s experience makes it seem treacherous—and in the interval, what?”

“Apply some of both of your remedies. Stop roaming and talk to the other women, but I shan’t enjoy that much.”

“Jealous, dear?”

“Not that, but you are so free and I am so tied. I feel like a bird in a cage talking through the bars to its mate outside. Do you think I will ever be released?”

“What nonsense! Marsden has agreed to

give us grounds at the end of the summer and that is not far off."

"Somehow, I am afraid when the time comes he will not carry it out. It all seems too good to ever happen."

"It has got to happen," Clayton said decisively.

"How can you make him do it, if he refuses?"

"We are educating his extravagant tastes so he will do anything to get the money. That is why I am keeping him well supplied now. The French girl is undoubtedly playing a good second. Here we are at home again. I think we have learned something valuable this afternoon, and we must plan accordingly for the balance of our stay here."

"Don't be too fascinating to other women, Edward. I don't mind their falling in love with you, but love is so contagious. I must find some antitoxin to inoculate you with."

"Your kisses are all the inoculation I need. Keep me well supplied, dearest."

XII

“Marsden, you will have to stay home more, for your continued absences are causing unpleasant comment,” said Clayton at tea the next afternoon on the occasion of Marsden’s first appearance in five days.

“Where did you get that notion?” asked Marsden.

“At Thurston’s yesterday. They were kind enough to make it only too plain.”

“Nonsense, no one knows when I am in or out of the house.”

“The maids do, and their gossip is inescapable. We are only here a few weeks longer. In London it won’t matter.”

“In London it will suit me much better to stay home than it does here. This country life is too deadly commonplace.”

“You used to like it,” broke in Grace.

Both men turned to look at her.

“Never mind what I used to do,” snapped Marsden. Then in a more bland manner he added, “you may be right, Clayton, I had not thought of the maids. We must give a dinner to show the countryside all is well, and we will make this dinner enough of a success to blot out any notions they may have about there being any rough corners in our delightful triangle.”

As they left the tea table, Clayton joined Marsden in a stroll toward the water.

“Little is ever gained by sarcasm. In this

situation, it should be absolutely avoided; Grace's position is hard enough as it is without adding to its difficulties."

"Grace be damned! Neither of you think of my position. Here I am, making myself ridiculous to all my friends, simply to furnish you with opportunities to enjoy each other's society. 'Butchered to make a Roman holiday,' and neither of you appreciate it. She is still my wife, when it comes to that, and I will talk to her as I damn please. You want me to stay here? Very well, I will, but I won't be nagged."

Clayton's fingers were itching to take him by the throat, but it was out of the question then. There was nothing to do but to swallow his wrath once more.

"Keep in mind one thing, Marsden, I have lived several years before reaching London, and under pressure I could continue to live without giving you further consideration. Grace is your wife, and as such, I suppose your English law would permit you to make her wretched in many ways. You are the best judge as to the pecuniary results to yourself if you attempt it."

Clayton's manner showed Marsden unmistakably that he had reached his limit, and he changed his tactics immediately.

"Forgive me, old chap! I have been a bit nervous and upset lately—you are entirely right. I shall apologize to Grace as I do to you," he said, patting Clayton on the back.

"I was sure you would think better of it. And, by the way, what have you heard from your Parisian friend lately, Mademoiselle de Convenience?"

“She will come when needed, provided I take good care of her in the interval.”

“Is she still in Paris?”

“Yes—why?”

“I thought perhaps your absence from home might be from a desire to rehearse the future performance.”

“No,” laughed Marsden, “that is a pleasure deferred.”

“Is the lady in public or private life?”

“Private—at the moment.”

“Ah, then she is sufficiently well known to offer good material for whatever investigations may be made.”

“I suppose so.”

“The stage, perhaps?”

“Well, yes, but not continuously. Small parts of a spectacular nature.”

“I see! One to whom Nature has been especially kind, except in the matter of conscience.”

“That’s good, no wonder people like to talk to you. When she comes over I will be glad to introduce you.”

“No thanks.”

“Too bad, you miss a lot.”

“I am glad, too. When do you expect to carry out our program?”

“I thought in the late fall, toward Christmas. People will be occupied with the holidays, they won’t bother much about me. It is a serious step, Clayton, to break away from a life’s associations and friends to branch out into the unknown, with no better pilot than a French actress. You know about how long she would stick when my money’s gone.”

“You have taken that into consideration.

The investment risk is accompanied by considerable profit."

"Not so much, after all. If this woman finds out what I am getting she will demand half or quit if she doesn't get it. We can't begin and then stop—she will know that as well as either of us."

"I don't see why you are limited to that one. There must be others available."

"None that I know. I decline to be mixed up with street women."

"Well, the choice is yours. You suggested the end of the summer. Now you speak of the middle of winter. I hope the next date you set will not be the Easter holidays. I might get tired of waiting."

"I can't see what all the hurry is about. You have no end of money and can surely wait a little while to be able to go back home with a beautiful wife. I am losing a wife who has helped me in every way. In place of all this, I must burden myself with a French actress who may not be so easy to shake off. I get a bit of money, it's true, but it won't last over a year or two—and then what?"

"Just what you did before. Find a woman who has some money and marry her."

"That may not be so easy with the handicap of this affair; at the moment, my record is unimpeachable. English girls are carefully guarded and notorious characters are not permitted near them, especially among the wealthy. Why can't we arrange for you to take Grace away and for me to get the divorce, then my record will be all right."

"And, for the rest of our lives, you would

be levying on me to keep you from bringing the scandal to America. Out of the question."

"You don't seem to have much of an opinion of me."

"It is not a question of opinion, but of self-preservation."

"Well, we will see what can be done," Marsden said, turning away.

Clayton walked back to the house in a thoughtful mood. It was evident Marsden meant to postpone carrying out his agreement as long as possible. In the meantime, he expected to get payments on account, which would add value to the postponement. The fellow was without a spark of honor of any sort, and unfortunately, was in command of the situation.

Doubtless, he spent his time away from home with other women, and evidence of it could be easily procured, but any effort to use it would entail his coming back at Grace and himself. This would hopelessly ruin Grace and preclude the possibility of a divorce, both sides being regarded as equally guilty legally. He had drifted into a nasty mess with this unscrupulous scoundrel, and there was no possible way to force his hand.

Grace had offered to leave everything and go anywhere with him, but she was not the type to survive disgrace and ostracism—he knew that better than she did. He had learned something of the strength of society's laws and held them in wholesome respect. No amount of money can win against them in the end—he had seen it tried. It appeared to be a waiting game and he must change his play; instead of feeding Marsden, he must starve him. Even this

would require some care, for, if denied too much, he might find some way to make Grace suffer even more.

What a foolish idea to have played into his hand so easily. Poor Grace! Their marriage was not yet in sight. There was no use depressing her with any recital of the conversation—she had forebodings enough as it was. The better way to cover up the wait was to make things as pleasant and exciting as he could for her, and put the lid down on Marsden's touches to the extreme limit.

He greeted Grace with his brightest manner and told her he had been discussing the divorce with Marsden and that they understood each other perfectly.

“If he will only do as you tell him, Edward, I know it will be best for him. He knows nothing of life. I did not either, until I saw and heard you. Now I see all my ideas were wrong. We were two children—if I had known anything of business and money matters, I would at least have kept the principal I had. He would spend any amount at all that was placed at his disposal, and, strangely enough, have nothing to show for it.”

“Never mind, little girl, your tutor arrived too late. Perhaps if you had been such a good little financier, you would not have had time to discover me, or valued me after discovery. Things usually turn out for the best. We will get through this dinner and the next few weeks, and then be back and lost in London, where we can do as we like. I think I will try gradually shutting off Marsden's supply of money,

he seems a bit too sure of himself now. Prosperity is most dangerous to his type."

"Yes, I am sure that is the best plan. I could never follow your idea of being liberal with him. He requires no education in extravagance."

"He represents a new type to me in many ways, and I am surprised now at my own stupidity in handling him. I think, however, I have his measure at last, and will make no more mistakes."

"I am afraid, dearest, the greatest mistake you ever made was to enter into a partnership with him."

"What do you mean?" he cried.

"What could I mean, but sharing the expenses of our home? But I forget it did not turn out that way after all. The burden has been yours exclusively."

"Nothing is a burden where you are concerned—but, oh! my darling!" he cried, taking her into his arms, "I long for the time when you will be mine entirely, without a lien of any kind."

XIII

Clayton heard the low hum of voices in the drawing room underneath him, so the people were undoubtedly beginning to arrive. He had purposely delayed going down so that Grace and Marsden would receive their guests alone. Grace had gone down some time before and he had heard Marsden descend shortly after. He wondered how they had felt waiting to welcome the friends who had been invited to see that the household was not disrupted. Life's paradoxes sometimes were amusing as well as tragic.

He regarded himself critically in the mirror to make sure he would present an unruffled front at the board of inquest.

Grace had asked him to mix some cocktails for dinner and he could not keep from smiling at his certain knowledge that those who would join in them would think everything was *couleur de rose*.

The clock struck eight and Clayton hurried downstairs just as the Cartwrights arrived; the wife, a noted collector of human documents, and the husband, a renowned raconteur of current events. Marsden rushed out to greet them with an exuberance of spirit that was cordiality rampant.

Clayton slipped by unnoticed and entered the drawing room. He joined the languid and soulful wife of the passive and bucolic Major Adams.

"Isn't our hostess a poem tonight?" she

drawled, as she gracefully gave him her hand.

"How can you keep your eyes off her?"

"My eyes are beguiled at the present moment."

"How gallant you are, Mr. Clayton. No wonder you have won all the women's hearts."

"I have not heard of any of my conquests," replied Clayton.

"Don't let my wife tease you," sputtered Major Adams, turning around to them impatiently. "She is always hearing things. She and Mrs. Cartwright are great friends."

"Oh, I'm not easily teased," laughed Clayton, and walked over to Mrs. Farrington, a diminutive widow, to take her out to dinner. Dariel was to be seated at his left—the two would keep him well occupied.

Grace felt as if she could scream by the time she sat down at the table. Marsden's display of consideration and Clayton's avoidance of her made her conscious every moment of their playing parts. She felt she would much prefer letting the world know the secret they were trying to hide than be forced to go through a scene like this again.

Grace knew Clayton's cocktails were most insidious, but she drank one to steady her nerves.

"I'll bet Clayton mixed them," Thurston said, as he put his empty glass down, "it takes an American to make a real cocktail."

"Yes, he did," said Grace, "and I think fairly strong—I am beginning to feel the effects of mine already."

"It won't hurt you, Grace," Thurston assured her, "you looked fagged out when you were standing in the drawing room."

“Well, it is not a bit stimulating to hear that I look bedraggled at my dinner party.”

“That is not the word I used, my dear, you never could look bedraggled, but we all have things in our lives to make us grow weary at times; sorrow’s mellowing, shading and shadowing bring out the beauty in character and face alike. I have never seen you more beautiful than you are tonight.”

“You are certainly an artistic conversationalist, Horace. You are toning down that first remark of yours most pleasingly.”

Grace turned to pay some attention to the guest at her right, but Major Adams was too obviously enjoying his dinner to be interrupted by an offering of mere words. Grace’s glance around the table assured her that all were enjoying themselves.

Marsden was amusing those at his end with his story-telling, and Clayton was certainly seeing to it that Dariel was not bored. They were having an animated conversation.

“How pretty Dariel looks tonight,” Grace said to Thurston.

“She is a great little pal,” he replied, looking over at his sister, “and getting a bit less strenuous. I actually saw her doing some needlework today.”

“Really?” laughed Grace. “I can’t imagine her doing anything so domestic.”

“Oh, she has been very busy lately, getting the house in town fixed up. We are going back on the first. When will you and Marsden be coming in?”

“By the first, or sooner. Mars is anxious to be in town now.”

“He is not as keen about the river as he used to be, is he? I remember seeing him constantly on it last year.”

“No, he seems to get more fun out of his motor this summer and virtually lives in it.”

“And when is Clayton returning to his home, Grace? I shall be stationed in Canada after the first of the year, and I hope he will be in the States when I strike there.”

“I think he is sure to be there by then, but I am sorry to hear you are ordered off. Will your mother and Dariel go with you?”

“No, but they will undoubtedly come over on a visit.”

“Mrs. Marsden, are we going to have a few hands at bridge this evening?” asked Major Adams.

“Yes, of course,” replied Grace, “we have enough for two tables.”

At the mention of bridge every one began discussing the game, and immediately after dinner the eight players seated themselves at the card tables.

“Don’t you really play bridge, Mr. Clayton?” asked Dariel, as they strolled out on the moonlit terrace and seated themselves in the garden chairs.

“If I wanted to make a hit with you, I should tell you confidentially that I was an expert and had denied it to have this tete-a-tete. But the sad truth is my friends tell me I have no card sense, and I decline to do anything I can’t do well.”

“How vain—and how crushing! You want to give a star performance or you won’t play;

and you are so painfully frank as to disclaim any desire to be with me."

"I see you prefer a pleasant liar to an expounder of truth."

"Truth wins in the end, of course, but the liar smoothes the road."

"If you will permit me to win in the end, I shall be completely satisfied."

"Oh, dear, this is so sudden!" exclaimed Dariel with mock concern. "But let's talk about Grace. She looks bewitching tonight and her husband acts as if he had just found it out."

"Perhaps he has," said Clayton dryly.

"Did you call his attention to it? . . . So you have made him jealous at last, have you? Now all the romance will be gone and the women will have no one to talk about."

"Have you heard any more gossip lately?" Clayton asked.

"Not a word."

"I'm relieved to hear that—I detest gossip."

"I'm sorry I was a tale-bearer, but I didn't know you would be so distressed. I think men are much more fearful of gossip than women, although their lives are never so seriously affected by it. Have you been making yourself attractive to any of the other women, as I advised you?"

"I don't know how to do that—but may I give you my undivided attention, at least, for tonight? Perhaps you will overlook my crudities."

"Who said you had any crudities?"

"You set my faults before me a moment ago, I have not forgotten them—vain and painfully

frank—a pretty bad combination, very mildly described by ‘crudities!’ ”

“I am not sure whether you are hurt or teasing. If you are hurt I am sorry.”

The look she gave him brought Clayton up with a jerk. This athletic Amazon was pretty much of a woman after all, and evidently she was somewhat interested in him. He was slow to flatter himself; but her interest, as he ran back over their various conversations, had never appeared to flag. While it was never obtrusive, she had always seemed as if she would be an ideal friend, but then a friendship between a man and a woman—rot! One or the other always fell. Was she leaning his way? The thought was not disagreeable, but it meant disloyalty to Grace—that would never do.

“You don’t answer,” she said at length.

“I was teasing, little girl. Perhaps we had better go in or Mrs. Cartwright will be compiling another story for circulation.”

“It is shocking, our sitting out here alone, isn’t it? But I don’t care, if it takes their tongues off Grace. I am frightfully fond of her and I have always honored her for being so loyal to Marsden. Horace says he is a rotter.—Why don’t you have her divorce him and marry you?”

“That is a clever idea, how can I bring it about?”

“I don’t know. You Americans always accomplish anything you set out to do. I’m sure you could arrange it.”

“Suppose you speak to Grace about it.”

“Don’t be silly! I am in earnest. Grace is

too sweet and lovely to waste her life with him."

"Have you any idea of the complications connected with a divorce? It is a serious matter; I have tried it and I know. And they say it is much more serious over here."

"Who says so?"

"Every one—but there is no use of our arranging matters for her tonight. Let's leave it until tomorrow, at least, she ought to be consulted. I think you implied you would take it up with her."

"You are the most exasperating man, it is impossible to pin you down to anything. You always wriggle out somehow."

"You don't like exasperating men?"

"Yes, I like them, but I don't know how far to trust them."

"'Trust me all in all, or not at all.'"

"Those improvident remarks are getting to be a habit with you. That is the second one in twenty minutes. I expect you to be sued for breach of promise soon, unless you confine all your talk to married women, which is probably safer."

"It is just on the end of my tongue to ask you to teach me how the Englishmen make love, but I recall you have had no experience."

"I said I had no experience at being in love. Being made love to is different. All girls get that, but you need no tutoring along those lines, I am sure. Do you need any other instructions?"

"Who was the chap who said, 'Love is to man a thing apart; 'tis woman's whole existence'?"

I don't like to ask you something outside your whole existence, that would not be fair."

"I don't know who said it first and I don't care—you have just announced it as a fact and it probably is, but it seems a very unfair division for a woman to pit her whole existence against the momentary diversion of a man. Don't you think so?"

"It sounds badly, but I am not responsible for it. I believe a woman gets what she gives in nine cases out of ten, Grace is probably the tenth."

"Yes, she is. She has given all there was in her to give and he has never appreciated it. I loathe a man who isn't a man—who expects a woman to fight his battles and pay his bills."

"You seem to know what you are talking about. Is Marsden commonly considered as you describe?"

"I think so. Horace says he was a mamma's boy and only child, brought up to think every one owed him something which it was his duty to collect. When he married Grace, we all loved her and wondered how she could have thrown herself away on him. If there has been any bliss in her life, it has been through ignorance, and wisdom will surely bring a cruel awakening."

"One thing she is certainly to be congratulated on and that is your friendship. I don't recall hearing one woman stand so loyally for another. You are a mighty fine girl."

"Oh, let's go in," Dariel said, rising, "I am getting frightfully restless sitting here so long."

Clayton took her in without objection.

As they entered, Thurston rose, saying, "Come here, Dariel and take my hand. I have not had a decent card all evening and it's getting on my nerves."

Dariel obligingly took his place and Thurston, glad to get away, walked out on the terrace, Clayton following him.

"Your summer evenings are wonderful," remarked Clayton. "How late does this good weather last?"

"It varies. Some years it runs right on through the autumn with little rain, only a gradual cooling off, but every one gets back to London, hoping some of it may reach there. How long are you staying?"

"I believe they are closing this house in about three weeks. I may finish the season with them here. My rooms and man are waiting for me in London."

"Then you are not going back to the States this autumn?"

"I may, it is uncertain, as yet. The fact is, certain conditions exist in a corporation in which I am a heavy stockholder, that makes it advisable for me not to be available just now. A strong minority desires something which I could not well refuse if I were within reach. My stock would make it a majority and incidentally work injury to some very nice people. I am supposed to be traveling on the Continent with a London banker's forwarding address. Any moment some representative may be sent over to work on me and I don't want to see him. This largely accounts for my presence here. If things take any important turn, I could be

home in a week. My attorney is keeping me advised."

"I see. I wondered how an active business man could content himself in these quiet surroundings."

"My friends are all like myself—occupied. This accounts for my being here alone. I could find no one who was congenial enough and also disengaged to take the trip with me. This matter involves a complete change in the policy of a public utility, a concerted attempt to strangle competition; but, in its ruthlessness, it outrages every sense of decency. Posing as a philanthropist would be disbelieved and regarded as hypocritical. They would only think I was holding out for some extra gouge. I don't want them to keep bidding for my stock, as I have no desire to sell it. I really think the plan is a mistake and likely to precipitate legislative or court interference, which, in the end, would be a disaster. I am informed that no one will listen to this notion so I am keeping away."

"By Jove, old man, you are all right! I wish we had more of your kind over here."

"You do me honor, I assure you. Have you ever met Mrs. Marsden's cousin, Arthur Gray? He is my oldest friend and attorney."

"I have often heard her speak of him as a most successful and promising barrister."

Thurston's relief at hearing so clean-cut an explanation of Clayton's presence was so great that his real admiration for the strong personality of the American knew no bounds.

"Come over often," said he, "I like to talk to you, or, perhaps, I should say, I like to hear you talk. I am greatly interested in your prob-

lem and most curious to know how it turns out.”

“Thank you! It may be some time in maturing, but it will be a pleasure to report progress.”

“I shall appreciate it and will look forward to many pleasant meetings through the autumn.”

The sound of the players breaking into general conversation reached the two men and indicated that the game was over, so they entered the house.

When the guests had departed, Marsden turned to Clayton and said, “I think my party was a great success. Your paying so much attention to Dariel was masterly.”

When Marsden went up to his room, Clayton sat down beside Grace.

“I had a long talk with Thurston tonight, dear, and I told him quite a few matters concerning the business side of my stay here, which I think will put us all right with him. I have never gone into any details with you because you have troubles enough without considering mine; but, there happens to be a very real business reason why I should stay on here, which fits in beautifully with our plans. In fact, Gray may be over to see me any time now.”

“Oh, Edward, I will have to entertain him at my home.”

“Perhaps not, but, even so, you forget I have my rooms.”

“But you promised never to leave me again. Oh, what am I saying? Of course, there is nothing else to be done if he comes, but I dread it somehow.”

“You know I don’t want to leave you, sweet-

heart. I see no reason for his staying over a week at most."

"I wish I knew more about your business and your troubles and could help you bear them. You will tell them all to me when—when—when you can, won't you? I am going to be so bright and clever and such a help to you."

"You are all the world to me," Clayton said, taking her in his arms, "there is nothing you need learn but patience."

XIV

The summer was over and Grace was sitting in the drawing room of Briar Cottage waiting for the estate agent to call so that she could turn the cottage over to him. She knew it would be the last time she would enter it, and she felt oppressed at the leave-taking.

It had been the first home of which she had ever been the mistress and she had entered it with all the enthusiasm of a happy bride and with hopes of motherhood, she had peopled its rooms with her dream children. Now, as she sat in the darkened dismantled room, it seemed like a mausoleum in which she would soon be leaving all the treasures of her youth.

Marsden, she knew now, had never been worthy of her love, but she mourned the killing of it, even though a greater love had been given birth. What was their life to be for the next few months in the other house which had been their home?

Clayton was keeping his rooms, but intended living in the house, so that she would never be left alone with Mars again. Oh, how she longed for the time when the past could no longer intrude itself into the present and rob it of its contentment.

She knew Edward was doing all he could to hasten the time, and Mars all he could to retard it. Edward had shown her how despicable Mars was in every transaction. Yet, with all her contempt for the man she knew him to be, she

pitied the man who was once her husband, and did not want to see him hurt.

Clayton returned to motor her into town before the agent arrived, and saw the tears she was making a frantic effort to wipe away.

"Dearest," he said, "don't have any heart-aches over leaving this house. It has only given us a glimpse of what a paradise a home that was truly our own could be."

Clayton's tenderness brought back the tears. He took her in his arms and held her close until the sobs subsided.

The estate agent finally called for the keys and Grace and Clayton started for London.

"I have been looking forward all day, my dear Grace, to coming back for you. My flat seemed sepulchral and the formal ministrations of Wilson oppressive. I am glad I don't have to stay there all the time, but I think it would be wiser when Marsden is out of town. It will make things appear better all the way around."

Every allusion to intrigue or its necessity cut Grace to the quick. In spite of Clayton's fear for her of the world's disapproval, she felt she could be more happy with it than forever feeling the humiliation of having to conceal and hide.

"Why don't you answer? Don't you agree with me, dear? We must exert some caution."

"Oh, I see the wisdom of caution, Edward, but the discussion of it hurts."

"I am sorry, Grace, hurting you is the thing farthest from my mind. Poor little girl, I am afraid you are worn and fagged out from having so much moving to do."

"Now, don't try to find all sorts of excuses

for my inconsistency. I myself can't fathom the complexities of my nature."

"It is not the complexities of your nature, sweetheart, but the perplexities of the situation."

Grace had sent the maids up to town early in the morning to get the house in order, and it had the appearance of their just having left it, when they walked in, and of nothing having been disturbed. Its unalterableness struck her forcibly and accentuated the great change that had come into her life since she had left its doors a few months ago.

At dinner that evening Marsden announced that he had been ordered to Dover and would only be able to get home occasional week-ends. At first, Grace was loath to believe this, but as the discussion progressed, she knew from Marsden's annoyance at it, that it must be true. He had been counting on a job at the War Office enabling him to stay in London.

"What do you think now, Edward?" asked Grace, as soon as Marsden had taken himself off to the club. "It would be horrible here alone just to placate somebody who might be interested in our affairs. It all seems foolish to me, and I see less objection to your being here right along than there was on the Thames."

"You know you do not have to urge me to be with you, dearest, but I must keep my rooms for appearance's sake and use them occasionally. You make it a little harder not wanting to discuss details—and there are many we should consider."

"I will try to be sensible, Edward, tell me what they are."

“One very important thing is, I want to give you a lump sum to put in the bank, so you can run your house and get the things you need for yourself without having to discuss it with anyone.”

“Oh, Edward, is that necessary?”

“Quite! And, surely you will like that arrangement better than the one we have had.”

“Yes, I will, Edward,” Grace said, with the color mounting to her cheeks, “but I hate the expense of everything falling on you.”

“It is absurd for you to feel that way, dearest. I am the only one now who has a right to do for you, and to see you have everything will be my greatest pleasure.—Another thing, very important, you must not neglect your women friends. I do not believe any woman can be happy without some other woman to talk to.”

“I don’t need any one but you, dear.”

“That is very lovely and flattering—and now that we are in London, we can roam about together as much as we like without fear of comment. We will be lost in its vastness. But let us not talk any more about the complications of the present, but of the time when we take up our life in America. England is really a fascinating place and the people charming. I like them a great deal better than I expected to, but my idea of real happiness will be realized when I have you as my wife back in our own country. I know you will enjoy New York better than our native Quaker town.”

“What happiness—to be back there with thee! My enthusiasm for England has waned. The first emotion you stirred within me was a

longing to see my old home again—now you make me long to see our new home.”

They spent the rest of the evening planning their future in America. That night Grace dreamed she had embarked for home. Every little detail of the trip was complete—she watched unconcernedly the disappearance of the English shore with heart and thought centered upon the port across the seas. After one or two calm days they ran into frightfully heavy weather and she was terrified by the hugeness of the waves that tossed them about unmercifully—the journey seemed interminable—and when she was awakened by the maid bringing in her tea, they had not yet reached harbor.

That morning, with much bad temper, Marsden packed up his things and departed for Dover.

Clayton had stayed in his room to avoid seeing Marsden off, but he heard Grace saying good-bye to him and telling him she hoped he would not find it very dull in Dover.

What a forgiving woman! Knowing him for what he was, she was still considerate of his feelings. Mothers and sisters were often imbued with divine forgiveness, but he could not understand how a wife placed in her position could still find even mercy in her heart for so gross an offender.

He remained in his room a few minutes frowning and absorbed before he went downstairs to find Grace.

“Hello there!” he cried, as he came upon her seated in the window-seat on the landing of the stairs. “What are you doing perched up here?”

“Waiting for you—are you going out?”

“Yes, I have two important errands this morning—banker’s and tailor’s. How would you like to meet me at the Carleton for luncheon?”

“I would like to go with you now. I have nothing to do.”

“Splendid, I will get a taxi.”

“Oh, let’s take a little walk first, we can pick up one when we get tired.”

London was having one of its rare treats of sunshine, and there was a snap to the air that made walking delightful. They passed two of their acquaintances on their way down Piccadilly and just as they were turning down Bond Street, Major Sullivan overhauled them. He asked after Marsden, and on hearing that he was out of town, told Clayton he would take him under his wing and look him up the next day at his rooms.

After Clayton had had a fitting at the tailors, they took a taxi to the bank and from there went for a drive in Hyde Park. It was lovely knocking about London with Grace as a companion. How much more interesting everything was than when he had driven around by himself in the early days of his arrival.

He felt now as if he would really enjoy a sight-seeing expedition and asked Grace if she would, after luncheon, take him to what she thought were the most interesting places. Grace was delighted with the idea of showing him about.

When they were ready to leave the Carleton, Clayton sent for his car. But the day was so perfect, they decided to explore the open coun-

try rather than any of the buildings in town, as they could take in the latter when the weather got bad. It was too wonderful a day not to be out.

“Isn’t it glorious and exhilarating!” exclaimed Clayton as they sped down the country road carpeted with golden tinted autumn leaves.

“Yes, but the ‘falling leaf and fading tree’ mean ‘good-bye summer’ and I hate to see it go.”

“I would, too, dearest, if it were not that we like the swallows, were making ready to fly.”

XV

Marsden was glad to be back in London, but he must have an interview with Clayton before he would be able to enjoy its life. As soon as he reached the house he hunted Clayton up. The week had been a long and unpleasant one to him, and he was going to get some money to make up for his banishment. Clayton and Grace had evidently been having a good time and he was going to have his. He had worked himself up to the point of being aggrieved, so he could broach the subject of his wants without any preliminaries.

“Clayton, I have had some heavy drafts on me lately, from Paris and elsewhere, and I am short. Will you let me have fifty pounds?”

“Let’s see,” said Clayton, “it is just about five weeks since you had five hundred pounds. That means a hundred pounds a week. Running on high gear, aren’t you?”

“I have very heavy expenses as you very well know. I sent two hundred pounds to Paris as a retainer.”

“Indeed! That ought to retain the lady for some time. Assuming that you recall the sum correctly, that still leaves sixty pounds a week for personal expenses. I can’t quite follow that. Are you playing an occasionally unlucky game of cards?”

“No, I am not—and, moreover, I don’t intend to be catechized like a schoolboy on expenses. I have always lived like a gentleman and when

I can't get sufficient to do that, I am ready to pass out."

"A gentleman is not gauged by what he has, but how he gets it."

"I don't need any instructions in ethics, either."

"No, I quite understand that. At the moment, your need is money—and I would like you to understand that, at the moment, it is not convenient for me to give you any."

"When will it be convenient?"

"When you show a few more signs of a sincere desire to carry out the bargain you have made and for which you have already been paid."

"What do you mean? Do you think I do not intend to carry it out?"

"I am not sure of your intentions. Where I came from, when a man makes a bargain and gets a payment on account we expect prompt performance on his part. If we don't get it, we take action to make him live up to his agreement. In this particular case, I can't make you perform, but I refuse to make any further payments until I see some action."

"Nonsense, old man! I am only too anxious to get the thing over—just let me do it in my own way and don't hurry me too much. I know my business better than you do," Marsden added, smilingly.

"All right, and you let me make payments in my own way, too," said Clayton, with a nod that plainly indicated that the discussion was terminated.

Marsden went up to his room to think out some new method of extraction. As he passed

Grace's room he saw her sitting at her desk, unmistakably making out checks. That was something new. Clayton had undoubtedly given her a bank account. There was no time to approach her. Clayton might come up now at any moment.

He knew Clayton deposited with Smith & Harrison and doubtless the account was in that bank. He would endeavor to learn the amount. Things looked more promising. He got his hat and stick and started out for the bank.

Arriving there, he stepped up to the clerk who knew him, and said, "My wife has lost her check book, she would like to have another and a memorandum of her balance."

The clerk handed him a check book and a balance statement of nine hundred and seventy-eight pounds.

When he returned home luck was with him—Clayton had gone out and his wife was alone.

"Grace, I have got to have some money. Clayton refused it this morning, saying you were making out the checks now and I'd have to look to you."

"I don't believe he ever said such a thing."

"Well, whether you believe it or not, surely you can give me two hundred pounds out of the thousand pounds he gave you."

"Please don't ask me for any such large sum as that. The money is for household expenses for a long time. I am sure Edward did not expect you to come to me for any such huge amount."

"You have not humiliated me enough, have you? You would like me to come to you every few days for a pound or two, while you can

indulge yourself in every luxury, relieved of the burden of my presence. You'll be going off with him in two or three months and don't need that much for the house."

"I know—but—"

"I don't want to hear any more excuses. Sit down and write out a check 'To Bearer' for two hundred pounds. You can practice a few economies and he will never be any the wiser."

Saying 'No' to her husband was something Grace had never learned, so she finally, reluctantly and fearfully, complied with his demands.

Grace remained motionless at her desk, sick at heart. She knew, without reflection, that Clayton had never sent Mars to her, but how Mars could have learned so quickly of the whole affair was uncanny. Peace with her was ended.

There was only one course open—she must go to Clayton and give him back the balance before Marsden could get any more away from her. What could she say in excuse for her weakness in giving him this large amount? Nothing, but she should and would tell Edward the moment he returned.

With her mind fully made up she dressed early for dinner and impatiently awaited him.

"Well, sweetheart—all alone? Marsden has not returned?"

"Yes, he came, but he has gone out again. And, oh, Edward, I must talk to you about some very disturbing things."

"Not a bit of it—I refuse to hear anything disturbing now. I am hungry and don't want my appetite spoiled. Tell me tonight. I met Thurston on the street and he insisted upon my going to the Club with him. That is why

I am so late. He wanted me to dine with them and I had the hardest time to get away. He had no end of questions and I hope I may be forgiven for my replies. He says he will drop in on me at my rooms very often. By the time he gets through missing me there, he will regard me as the most popular man in London."

"You would be if every one knew you as I do."

"What a little partisan you are. Your devotion will make me insufferable before long. If you will excuse me I will dash up and change. I was able to get stalls for the play tonight."

Marsden did not return before they left and the check was forgotten. Later that night it occurred to Grace, but she put off the confession until morning.

When morning came, she was less certain of the wisdom of telling being the best course. Perhaps, after all, if she waited until Mars wanted more, a long enough time would have passed to make it unnecessary to explain what she had given. She could simply tell Edward that Mars had learned of the account and that her only hope for peace was to give it up and to let him pay the bills as before. The more she thought of this plan, the more she liked it. Fully persuaded that it was the proper way, she dismissed the unpleasant subject.

It was not until late Sunday evening that Marsden showed up again. He gave Grace and Clayton a jovial "hello," but did not join them in the drawing room.

"Marsden looks as if he had been hitting the high spots," said Clayton. "I wonder whose

treat it was. He told me yesterday he was short of funds, but I did not supply the deficiency.”

Grace’s cheeks burned—she felt on the verge of collapse as she realized the enormity of the thing she had done and the utter foolishness of it, but the opportunity for confession was gone. She had not the strength physically or mentally to attempt to make it now.

Next morning Marsden made an early start without breakfast or seeing either of them.

XVI

Clayton thought he would be lost in the fog once back in London, but he had met a lot of people; and friendly interest and curiosity were penetrating his fancied mist of obscurity. Nothing but poverty ever hides one effectually from the public's gaze and consideration.

Greatly to his surprise, every time he went to his flat he found invitations and memorandums of telephone calls. It was impossible to ignore them all. He fell into the habit of going to his flat each afternoon, and Wilson began telling all inquirers that Mr. Clayton was always home around three o'clock.

Thurston was becoming almost a daily caller and their friendship was growing rapidly. The only troublesome feature of it being the constant invitations which were not always easy to refuse. Clayton had no desire to go anywhere without Grace, yet, on her account, he felt he should be seen to some extent with others.

It was now nearly November and Marsden had said nothing to indicate he was making any move to carry out his part of the program, nor had he, strangely enough, made any further efforts to collect. He had been most pleasant and courteous to Grace, at least, in Clayton's presence, and to all appearances they were settling down into a permanent domesticity. After all, we can never regulate the affairs of life beyond a certain point—things seem to have to adjust themselves at times. But in spite of

the smoothness with which everything was running at present, Clayton felt he must make another effort to bring things to an issue.

It was a rainy Sunday morning and no time could be more propitious. Immediately after breakfast he took up the subject with Marsden.

"What do you hear from Mademoiselle? When will she be over?"

"She wrote me, not long ago, that she did not think there was going to be enough in it to compensate her for the injury the publicity might do her."

"What did you reply?"

"What could I? It was an invitation for a draft, but I was unable to send her one."

"Just what did you answer?"

"I didn't answer at all."

"How long ago was this?"

"Oh, about ten days."

"She no longer recalls your two hundred pound retainer?"

"Apparently not."

"What do you propose to do now?"

"Look for some one else, I suppose. Some one who will undertake to go through with it for the glory that is in it."

Clayton made no reply. Truly this parasite had the best of every argument. Neither the feeding nor the starving process seemed to produce results. Even the lump sum was in vain. Marsden wanted to go right along as he was. The whole situation was nauseating in the extreme. Marsden regarded Grace as a source of revenue, and was unwilling to release his hold on her.

Coming back to the subject again Clayton

said, "What is it you want to do? Cut out all the camouflage now and tell me what you have in mind."

"I have nothing to tell you. You have robbed me of my wife's affections and you refuse to supply me with sufficient funds to arrange a decent divorce. I am helpless. The real question is, what is it you want?"

"I think we have gotten past that. You know very well what I want and what you agreed to do in connection with your highly improbable *Mademoiselle de Convenance*. Three months have been wasted now. My stay in England is not indefinite. I did not come here to live—you surely have sense enough to see that and know that I will return to America sooner or later to stay. Once for all, name your terms."

"What can any man want more than what you already have? Grace is completely yours and no one knows it—to the world you are a single man and able to go anywhere. The freedom of a bachelor and all the joys of matrimony. Nothing could be more ideal, but you are not satisfied. On the other hand, I, the author of all your happiness, am obliged to grub along on my pay without any recognition of my value as a chaperon."

Listening to Marsden's homily, Clayton's feelings subsided from fury to disgust. Why not pension the beggar off for a few months and let things drift until he could think of some way to make him come to terms?

"Marsden, I am going to give you two hundred pounds on the first of November, which is only a few days off, and one hundred and seventy-five pounds on the first of December,

decreasing twenty-five pounds a month until I go to America with Grace or alone. When you are ready to take the balance of ten thousand pounds and give her the divorce, let me know."

"Agreed!" replied Marsden. "I will start at once to study out some plan for it."

The morning argument with Marsden made Clayton feel out of sorts all day. After the ordeal of forced levity at the luncheon table, he felt he must get out alone. He took a long walk and then sought the quiet of his flat. He was not long there before Thurston dropped in and gave him an invitation from his mother to join the family at dinner that evening. Clayton felt there was no way of refusing the invitation, and besides, there was a certain amount of pleasant anticipation in accepting.

The atmosphere at the Thurston's home was always pleasing to Clayton, but tonight as he sat down to dinner, the charm of his surroundings made itself especially felt. Here were no sordid undercurrents—no jarring problems for arrangement. Life was clean, wholesome and normal. These were the environs Grace belonged in and that he wanted for her.

"Well, how is your show coming along, Clayton?" asked Thurston. "You have not mentioned it lately, and I had almost forgotten the possibility of your having to leave us suddenly one of these days."

"Oh," said Mrs. Thurston, "I hope you will not go back soon—is there any chance of it?"

"I have not heard anything new for some time. The pot seems to be boiling quietly, but has not bubbled over yet," replied Clayton.

"I told Mr. Clayton I had had a course in do-

mestic science, he is illustrating his business explanation so I can understand it," broke in Dariel. "I think it is most awfully nice of him."

Clayton laughed delightedly—it was a pleasure to hear her girlish chaff once more, and he gave himself up to the enjoyment of her company and *bonhomie* until Mrs. Thurston's remark, that she hoped to see Grace soon, put an immediate check upon his gaiety and he had a twinge of guilt as he pictured her at home alone.

"Let us run in on Grace tomorrow afternoon," he said to Dariel. "I think she has rather a dreary time of it now."

"I should love to," said Dariel.

"And so should I," Horace added.

After dinner Mrs. Thurston said she would like to have a game of bridge, but explained she did not permit any stakes in her home. Dariel offered to take Clayton as a partner, saying, "I remember your assertion that you did not have any 'card sense.' I want to see if you were telling the truth."

"You will soon see," said Clayton, seating himself opposite her.

As the game progressed, Clayton's luck was astonishing. Hand after hand came to him until his bid of 'no trump' became a joke.

"This is surely an omen of ill-luck in love," said he, finally. "What do you think I had better do about it?"

"Change partners," suggested Mrs. Thurston.

"I decline to do that—she has brought me the first good fortune at cards I have ever had.

Had this happened ten years ago, I might have been a gambler."

After a few more hands Clayton rose to go. Thurston and Dariel started to follow him to the door, but Mrs. Thurston laid a restraining hand on her son's arm and Dariel went alone.

As they stood in the hall she said, "What a wonderful man you are, you sweep every one, old and young, before you. To think of your being able to win Mother, even!"

"You are very disrespectful to call your mother 'old.' I am curious to know who the young person is."

"Perhaps it is Grace. I am sure she is madly in love with you—how could she help it?"

"How do you help it?"

It was a light remark, made with no motive or intention whatsoever, but the moment the words were out, he would have given anything to recall them.

She did not answer, but simply looked at him with an expression in her eyes of loving adoration. Raising her hand to his lips, he said, "Good-night, little friend, I would like you to value me as highly as I do you."

Walking was a relief to him. What had he been thinking of to allow a rash remark like that to escape him and create a situation that was impossible from every point of view? The glimpses he had had of the Thurston's home life appealed to his better nature, but tonight it had done more. It had lifted him up to the point where, for the first time, his whole life rose up in judgment against him. Memories of his earlier standards and ideals confronted him condemningly. He realized to live on this way

was atrophying to his conscience, and yet—even if he could bring himself to give up Grace, to leave her the victim of her husband would be criminal. He had gotten himself into a vise from which there was no release. She was his to protect, all the laws of the State and Church notwithstanding. He would keep away from Dariel Thurston until she had time to get over her foolish admiration for himself. There must certainly be no further complications.

With his mind more at ease, he hailed a passing taxi and drove home.

XVII

The incredible rapidity of Marsden's deterioration filled Grace with horror. Every time he had an opportunity to speak to her alone, he would accuse her of being the cause of it all. She had been willing to make a sacrifice of her life for the man she loved, but it was horrible to think she had been the cause of another's becoming a blackguard and losing all sense of decency and self-respect. He had succeeded in getting another hundred and fifty pounds away from her in small amounts by threats and entreaties.

Grace sat at her desk going over these accounts while she was making these disagreeable mental entries.

"In financial difficulties?" asked Clayton as he entered the room and saw her working at her books, her face flushed and concerned.

"I do get things balled up a bit, but I'll finish it some other time."

"No, don't do that, let me help you," he said, picking up the vouchers. "You issue a lot of checks but they are all small. It is the only way to do. Pay everything by check and so have an indisputable receipt for each.—Hello! here's a big one, two hundred pounds—and to bearer. Why did you want so much cash around the house? This is one of your early ones too."

"I—I—needed it at that time."

"Why it was cashed at Marsden's club and

they deposited it from there. What does it mean, Grace?"

"Oh, Edward, I meant to tell you at the time. I tried to when you came home that night, but you said you were too hungry to listen to disturbing things and then I put it off."

"Do you mean to tell me that you gave that scoundrel two hundred pounds about the first thing after I opened the account for you?"

"I couldn't help it, dearest. He saw me in my room writing a check and he demanded one for two hundred pounds. He seemed so desperate, I gave in."

"How did he happen to come into your room to see you do anything?" demanded Clayton suspiciously.

"I don't know—I must have left the door ajar. The first I knew he was at my elbow demanding money, telling me how much I had in the bank and how easily I could and must spare him two hundred pounds."

"What time of day was this?"

"Nearly noon, as I recall. Why are you asking me such strange questions—don't you believe what I am telling you?"

"I don't know what to believe after you tell me you have deliberately given your husband money."

"You are trying to hurt me—he is not my husband."

"You say he told you how much money you had in the bank—that is ridiculous—you mean you told him—but perhaps you carried the balance forward on the stubs—no you did not. Why do you tell me such an improbable story as that; at least make your excuses plausible."

"Edward, you no longer love me. I have never told you an untruth—I know I was weak and did wrong—after I had done it I was afraid to tell you."

"Had you come to me at the time, I should not have liked it, but should have instantly pardoned it. After all these weeks, to find it out by accident and then to have you stick to your silly story about his having known about the amount you had, destroys my confidence in you. Can it be possible that after all that has passed between us, you are capable of using me for his benefit?"

"Oh, I wish I were dead. There is nothing in life any more for me. I did not know you could be so hard and cruel."

"Grace, dear, I could forgive a woman anything but lying to me—women are nearly all liars and I have had my share of it already. I am going now to find out positively whether by any chance Marsden did get that information. Are you willing that I should try? Think before answering."

"Willing—why of course I'm willing. Oh, if I had only given you back the account as I felt I should after the thing first happened. But take what is left of it—I shall never draw another check on it."

"Not even to Marsden?"

Grace threw herself on the couch in a flood of tears without answer. Clayton hesitated a moment at the door, disturbed, but he did not go back, though he said, "Please don't cry, I shall be back in an hour."

Outside the house, Clayton realized the information he sought would be hard to get. It

could only have come from the bank or Grace. He had kept the deposit book himself. Hailing a taxi, he went to the bank, studying out how to approach the subject. In the secretary's office he said, "I made a deposit here some time ago of a thousand pounds to Grace Marsden. It was in partial settlement of a claim of hers which I had collected for her as her attorney. It was her wish that no one should know of this for reasons of her own. It seems her husband was promptly advised of it. Of course, this was not objectionable, but it made me wonder how many other people could learn of it in the same way."

"I am sure, Mr. Clayton, he did not learn it here, but I will investigate immediately."

Clayton awaited his return, which was in a moment, with the story of the lost check book.

"Thank you very much. Mrs. Marsden has probably forgotten sending him for it."

Clayton went back very much ashamed of his suspicions but still hurt over the situation. The sight of Grace's miserable and hopeless face was too much for him, and he reproached himself bitterly for doubting her word.

Drawing her down to the sofa beside him, he told her what he had learned, adding, "It all shows what a resourceful knave he is and how cunning he can be when necessary. Now, dearie, we will forget this whole wretched matter, but don't let it happen again. Your giving him money only retards my being able to bring him to terms."

"There is no danger, Edward, dear. I want no more check books. You don't know how he

puts down the screws. The only safety is in having nothing to give."

"No—I want you to go right on with it and prove to me in that way that you love me too much to care what screws he puts down. What is he to you—what could he do? Surely, if you care nothing for him, it is easy to say 'No' to his demands for money."

"I will do as you say, Edward, and I will bring you the check book every evening to show you what I have drawn out."

"That is unnecessary, you are not under observation."

"Are you sure everything is all right again, sweetheart?" asked Grace. "I could not survive the loss of your trust in me."

"My faith and trust in you, darling, is absolute, but I become maddened when I think of your being influenced in any way by Marsden."

In her room, Grace felt herself slipping down the precipice to the abyss of despair, unable to hold on to any of her old illusions. They, too, were sliding, and all her hopes and ideals were tumbling and crashing around her. Oh, how she wished she had never consented to let things run on as they were. Things never do remain at just the same level. Religion, love, wealth, all alike—increase or decrease—and a love exposed to such an environment of intrigue and deception could not be increased or spiritualized. Tranquil domesticity could never be assumed under irregular conditions. Of course, it was not right for her to have given Marsden the money—she was distressed and horrified at the double significance it had given Edward.

How different her contemplation of life was now! She wondered if she would always have to survey it from the valley of tears.

The next day Clayton did all in his power to show Grace that love and confidence had survived and peace was restored. Perhaps to show more effectually that money had not been the issue, he wanted to buy her everything he saw when they went out shopping and in spite of her remonstrance, he bought her a diamond and pearl heart-shaped brooch.

"What a splendid time we shall have, dearest, when we buy your trousseau," Clayton said enthusiastically, when he saw how pleased Grace was with her present, after all her entreaties not to buy it.

"That will be an enchanting time, dear," Grace answered sweetly.

"You must have everything new, not a pocket-handkerchief of Mrs. Marsden's."

"I shall be happy, Edward, to take nothing from the rag-bag of the past." But Grace realized as they sat there planning the wardrobe of a bride, that youth's garments had been laid away and that among all the new fabrics their fancy was weaving, there would ever be present the widow's weeds. Memory is never buried and all women keep their little bits of crêpe hidden among their most brilliant attire.

The arrival of Dariel and Captain Thurston put an end to their talk and futuristic work. Dariel told them breathlessly that she and her mother had decided to go to Canada with Horace next month and that they would visit the States for a while before settling down.

“Do say you will be there while we are, Mr. Clayton,” she pleaded, turning to him.

“I will make every effort to get back about that time.”

“Oh, why don’t you arrange to sail on the same steamer, then we should have a jolly trip.”

“What is your ship and sailing?”

“The Aquitania, December 31st.”

“I will keep that date in mind.”

“Don’t you ever get homesick, Grace?” asked Thurston. “Wouldn’t it be ripping if you could get off for a little visit? We would have a four-some for everything. Dariel and Clayton are hitting it off famously lately and you and I have always been good pals. Can’t it be arranged?”

“It sounds delightful,” laughed Grace, “but my prospects for visiting America so soon are not very promising, I fear.”

XVIII

“Well, Marsden, here is your one hundred and seventy-five pounds, due today, December first. January first it will be one hundred and fifty—perhaps. I say, perhaps, because if you break your word and don’t start something serious before the Christmas holidays, the time you set, I shall not feel bound to keep mine and in all probability will go home. You rather expected to be generally overlooked about this time in the excitement of approaching Christmas. Is it working out that way?”

“Thank you. I am being forgotten fast enough, but the trouble is to find the woman. I can’t seem to locate one.”

“I don’t see that it is necessary for you to have such an elaborate escapade. Something simple and commonplace would answer, wouldn’t it?”

“Something for two and six, I suppose. No, I refuse to be advertised as a paltry villain. When I go up I want to go with a whirl. A Marsden does not do things by halves.”

“But aren’t you setting yourself a somewhat difficult task?”

“Perhaps, but it does not matter.”

“Are you trying to kill two birds with one stone and in the same performance secure a woman of sufficient wealth to assure your future? If so, I think we may as well abandon the whole thing at once.”

“No,” replied Marsden hastily, “I am not so foolish as that. Such a result would require

quite a campaign and, as you say, might be a difficult task. No, my requirements are not unreasonable. What chance would I have to marry well again if any one could refer to my having eloped with some street woman? Such things are not susceptible of explanation."

"Well, what the devil do you intend to do?" replied Clayton, losing his temper.

"I am willing to do anything I decently can. You want me to create the situation. Those things create themselves if you give them time, but what can I do at Dover? If I were constantly in London, I might have lots of chances to work up an affair, but it is impossible there and just as impossible here between Saturday night and Monday morning."

"Marsden, I am afraid I shall not get any further with you than I am now and it is foolish to expect it."

"Nonsense. You know better than that, but why don't you suggest some feasible plan? It is easy to criticize, why don't you create something?"

"You spend a lot of money, and I am quite sure most of it on women. I don't believe you gamble much. There is only one class of women who will let a married man spend money on them to any extent and some one of those you know must have her price for this thing."

"Even assuming that were true, which it is not, do you think even gay women would take that chance without a big stake? Your ten thousand pounds would get nowhere in it."

"That is too bad. I am glad you told me and saved me the outlay. I will look up the sailings," Clayton said, turning away.

“Don’t be foolish. Can’t you stand it here awhile? Every one receives you. Is London so much behind New York in social attractions?”

“We are not discussing the relative merits of New York and London. I merely wish you to understand that this is the last conversation I intend to have with you on this matter. If within one month from today you have not accomplished something, I shall adjust matters regardless of your co-operation.”

On reaching his room he found a cable.

“Am leaving New York third, arrive tenth. Gray.”

The axe had fallen. In all probability he would be going within a month as he had told Marsden. Of course, no one could make him go back until he was ready, but he might cut a rather sorry figure to so keen a man as Gray, in inventing excuses for refusing. Something was surely up, to induce Gray to come. He had regarded his returning home so soon as a highly improbable possibility, good to scare Marsden with, but sure enough it was happening.

He walked slowly back towards the house. When he finally arrived he showed the cable to Grace.

“Oh, isn’t that terrible,” said she, scenting more concealment and intrigue.

“Why is it terrible? I thought you liked Gray. It may turn out well. He is very shrewd and a word or two carefully dropped will enlist his entire sympathy. He might know some better way to handle Marsden than either you or I have discovered.”

“I must have him here, of course.”

"I don't see that it is necessary in Marsden's absence. I hardly think he would expect it. He is well used to hotels and would probably prefer one for his short stay."

"Oh, I hope so."

"I am sure he will," concluded Clayton.

The intervening ten days passed very quickly. There were two boats arriving on the tenth and as the cable had not named the ship, Clayton could only await Gray's arrival at his rooms. After Marsden had gone the Monday before, Clayton began packing up so as to remove all traces of his presence at the Marsdens.

"This is the most depressing thing you have ever done, Edward," said Grace, "it seems a premonition of what will happen some day when I lose you."

"My dear little wife, such remarks as that, while they hurt, please me beyond words. You will never lose me while you fear it. I am sensitive and suspicious, I know, but no one is perfect except yourself. You must take me as you find me, but you will not lose me until you want to," said Clayton, coming to her and kissing her.

"When you call me that, Edward, my happiness is complete and even your packing-up loses its sting."

The momentous day arrived and Clayton spent most of it in his flat waiting for some word. At last he received a call from the Savoy in which Gray explained that he had come over with his wife to have her consult a famous London specialist as to the necessity for an operation. So he had not come over on his business after all, and that was why he had not let Clayton know his ship.

Gray told Clayton there was little change in the business situation at home and asked him to dine with them at their hotel that evening. Clayton accepted, and after hurriedly dressing drove first to Grace's.

When he had told her the news, she at once said, "Arthur's wife makes all the difference in the world. She is a lovely woman who never says a disagreeable word of any one. It will be a pleasure to have them here. I suppose he will look me up at once; until he does, I can do nothing."

"They will undoubtedly look you up tomorrow," replied Clayton.

The dinner at the Savoy was most enjoyable to Clayton. Mrs. Gray looked quite badly and seemed much older than when he had last seen her. Her husband's solicitude for her left him little time to talk business and they put it off till later. Gray at once followed Clayton's suggestion to call Grace up and came back to his wife with her invitation to make her house their home while in London.

"I shall be so glad to accept," said Mrs. Gray. "Hotels mean nothing but discomfort to me now."

Before Clayton left it was fully decided that the Grays would go to Grace's the next day but not for over a week's visit, as they were anxious to get back to America to spend Christmas with their children.

Clayton promised to call the next afternoon and drive them everywhere. The whole visit took on a most agreeable aspect and Clayton enjoyed the prospect of many talks with his friend and attorney during its short duration.

While Mrs. Gray, at first, needed considerable attention, Grace found her presence most diverting. One visit to the specialist sufficed and Mrs. Gray was assured that what she needed was a particular course of treatment which he prescribed and not surgery. This was a tremendous relief and appeared to almost have affected a cure in itself. Both husband and wife were overflowing with happiness which was most contagious and Grace found herself sharing it to such an extent as to almost forget the storms of the recent past. Even Marsden outdid himself to make a favorable impression on the Grays this time, and Grace completely forgot Clayton's suggestion as to getting Gray's sympathy.

XIX

Mrs. Gray had expressed a desire to run over to Paris for a day or two and sail from Havre. She and her husband decided they would risk getting on the next ship from there and started for France after being in England but six days. They found on reaching Paris, that nothing was available on the first ship and it would be impossible to leave from Havre for two weeks. In three days Mrs. Gray was weary of sight-seeing and longed to be home. Engaging a Liverpool sailing from Paris, they returned to London on the night train with but a few hours to spare the next morning, before taking the train for Liverpool.

She would not hear of going to Grace's for so short a stay, so leaving her at the hotel, Gray drove up to once more thank Grace for all her hospitality.

Just as his taxi had nearly reached the Marsdens, he saw Clayton come out of the front door, enter a waiting taxi and drive off. It was barely half past eight and Gray wondered what had necessitated so early a call from Clayton.

He asked the maid who responded to his ring if Mr. Marsden was home. Answered in the negative, he stepped quickly into the house. To his surprise, he saw Grace sitting at the dining-room table on which were unmistakably the remains of breakfast for two. Grace glanced up and saw him in the hall.

Half rising, she cried, "Why Arthur, what brought you back?"

"We could not get a sailing from Havre and only from Liverpool. We are en route there. I ran up to once again thank you for all your kindness. Don't get up," he said, entering the dining room.

Grace resumed her seat and motioning him to the place opposite her, said, "Won't you let me order you some breakfast?"

"No, thank you," said Gray, taking the seat at her side which had been vacated by Clayton a few moments ago.

"Is it an English custom for men to drop in on their women friends for *petit dejeuner*?"

"You are not worrying about the propriety of having a cup of coffee with me, are you Arthur?"

"No, but I just saw Clayton leave this house, and evidently he had been having breakfast with you."

"Oh, he drops in for meals once in awhile," Grace answered, her color mounting to her forehead.

"Where is Marsden?"

"He—he will be here tomorrow."

"Breakfast is an extraordinary meal for men to drop in on in your husband's absence, isn't it?"

"Do you think so?" answered Grace, struggling for control of herself.

"I know so, and you do too. Tell me what it means Grace."

"I don't understand you, Arthur, and it seems to me you are asking some very unneces-

sary questions. What is there wrong in Mr. Clayton dropping in for breakfast?"

"Nothing, if Marsden were here, everything, when he is not."

"I am no longer a child in need of a guardian, Arthur."

"I am not so sure about that Grace. I am your nearest relative and your friend. I know you had a schoolgirl adoration for Clayton. You are not allowing it to influence your life as a married woman, are you? Tell me the whole story."

"There is nothing to tell, Arthur," answered Grace, her eyes beginning to fill with tears.

"Yes, there is, a whole lot. Now out with it."

"I tell you there is nothing, and I will not stay here to be talked to in this way," Grace said, rising and moving toward the door.

Gray rose quickly and placed himself between her and it.

"Answer me one thing—does Clayton stay in this house in Marsden's absence?"

"Let me pass," Grace cried, bursting into tears.

"I will when you answer my question, not before. You have both permitted me to bring my wife here and I have a right to know what the relations are between you and Clayton."

Finding escape impossible, Grace sank hopelessly into a seat. Gray waited until she had to some extent regained her composure, then began again. "Your attitude is not that of innocence, Grace, and I can only assume that you are carrying on an affair with Clayton, which pains me very much. This explains why

he has lost interest in his business and stays over here to its great detriment."

Seeing that further denial was useless, Grace, completely crushed, could only weep.

"This must stop, Grace. Your husband may not have Clayton's attractions or money but he is your husband, nevertheless, and I am sure is devoted to you. Clayton is a blackguard to sneak into Mars' home while he is away. I never dreamed he was capable of such an action."

"Mr. Clayton is not a blackguard nor does he sneak into any one's house. This is his home, his money pays for its maintenance. Mars has spent all my money and makes my life wretched by constant demands on me to get more."

"Then we were Clayton's guests while here, not Marsden's?"

"Yes," Grace admitted painfully.

"I see. I think I understand it all now. Marsden is a party to this *menage à trois*. I have often known of these things in my practice but did not expect to find one in my family. I shall see Clayton and tell him what I think of him."

"Oh, please don't. He has tried in every way to induce Mars to give me my freedom, so he could marry me and take me home with him. I think it is almost arranged now."

"It won't succeed if I can prevent it. Such things never bring happiness to any one."

"Do you think it means happiness for me to stay on with Mars and be bullied and abused until I am almost ready to steal money to supply his demand?"

"What! I don't believe it."

"You say you are going to Edward. I doubt if anything I can say will prevent you. Perhaps you will believe him."

"Grace, do you mean to say that Marsden is benefiting by your permitting Clayton to take his place in your house here? I can't think it."

"Oh, Arthur, I cannot bear any more. Go away, please, and think what you like. I shall die if this is kept up any longer."

"Tell me one thing more, Grace. Where can I find Clayton right now? I only have a few hours, but I must and will see him."

"I don't know. Ring up his flat if you like. His man may know."

"No, I will go there. I will ring you up before leaving, or just possibly come back here for a word."

Turning to go, he added, "This is a damnable thing, little girl, and I am sorry for you."

Grace wearily mounted the stairs to her room and threw herself on the bed with the feeling that the earth had opened beneath her feet and she was sinking into some bottomless pit of shame from which she could never hope to rise or escape.

Gray drove at once to Clayton's rooms and found him reading his mail.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," said Clayton, rising and extending his hand. "I had no idea you would be back this way."

Gray sat down without noticing the extended hand, much to Clayton's surprise.

"This is the second time I have seen you this morning, Clayton. I got to the Marsden's just as you were leaving there."

"Indeed, I am sorry I missed you."

“Grace has told me all about everything. I am here to demand your explanation. She has told me a most extraordinary story.”

“What was the story?”

“She implied that Marsden was equal to using her for any purpose that would bring in a cash return. Is that true?”

“It isn’t half the truth. He is equal to anything he thinks he could get away with. In all my life I never ran across such a character.”

“How do you find yourself mixed up with them?”

“See here, Gray, don’t begin any of your damned cross-examination talk to me or this interview will terminate promptly and unpleasantly. If you want to discuss Marsden, go ahead, but don’t bracket Grace with him, even by innuendo. She is the woman I love and respect, and, please God, will eventually make my wife.”

“That has the right sound, Clayton, but how in the devil did things come to such a state? Don’t you realize that Grace is being branded by things running on in this outrageous fashion? If you wish to marry her, and he is the cur you say he is, don’t be such a damn fool as to live in the same house as she and piling evidence against her. Your actions are those of a fool or a knave. I got very little satisfaction out of the questions I put to Grace.”

“How came you to question her anyhow?”

“When I saw you leaving her home so early this morning, I got a very disagreeable impression and on joining Grace in the dining-room, realized you had been breakfasting with her. I am her cousin and, up to this moment, have

been your attorney. As her cousin, I was prepared to protect her, at the expense of a valued client. Her story seemed so improbable, that, while I sympathized with her feelings, I expect I questioned her pretty sharply."

"And, no doubt, made her sick doing it. It seems to me the duty of a cousin weighs heavily on you, Gray."

"Well, as I said, I am sorry for it. How can I make amends?"

"I will take care of that. You let her alone. You have probably done enough harm now to last a lifetime. If you are satisfied with your achievement, the proper thing for you to do is to forget it completely, before you have an opportunity to mention it to a human being. That is the course I expect you to take."

"Don't worry about that, I may occasionally prosecute but I never persecute."

"Very well, we will let it go at that."

"Tell me what you care to do, old man; when your temper cools off you will see I have only done what you would doubtless do in my place, imagining, as I did, that Marsden was an injured husband."

"Perhaps you did," replied Clayton, grudgingly, "but you have undoubtedly crushed the life out of Grace in doing it. I can't imagine myself getting so interested as all that."

"I have said that I regretted it. Do you expect me to turn back the clock? What more can I do?"

"There isn't much to tell. I found her at the mercy of this wretch and I haven't dared to leave. As I said before, he would beat her in a minute if she had no one but him to look

to and yet she is foolish enough to calf after him, worrying herself to death for fear she may have in some way been an injury to him. He has spent her \$100,000 and sent me along for quite a sum, besides. How in the devil can I get rid of the cur?"

"Get enough influence to have him stationed in Central Africa, with no home leave."

"What nonsense. How can I get influence here?"

"If you have forgotten how it is useless to remind you. I will look into the matter and try to suggest something. I must go now or my wife will think I have met with some accident. Good-bye, old chap, I will be thinking about you both on the way over and may discover a way out. Tell Grace I am hers to command."

"Good-bye, Gray. I will now go and try to patch up the damage you have done."

XX

After Gray left, Clayton lost no time in returning to Grace. He knew she was suffering after the scene with her cousin.

What a *contretemps*! Gray's arriving at the house the very moment of his departure, or was it one of fate's accurately calculated incidents?

Grace had not stayed in her room long, but had gone down to the drawing room to await Arthur's return.

Clayton was surprised to find her there so apparently calm and self-possessed.

"I have just left Gray and I am sorry, dear, that you had to go through such a trying ordeal on my account," Clayton said sympathetically, "but I put him right," he added. "He knows now you are in no way to blame for this triangle."

"I don't care what he thinks of me, Edward, but I hope it will not cost you his friendship."

"Not a bit of it, my dear, he is all for us, and has promised, on his journey home, to map out the proper course for us to take. Perhaps, after all, your weakness in telling him everything will turn out in the end to have been the best thing."

"Arthur saw you leave, Edward, and he knew you had been having breakfast with me."

"Exactly, but that could have been innocent; and, while so early a morning call might have been subject to Arthur's criticism, it would not

have warranted his condemnation—you brought that upon yourself.”

“Yes, no doubt I did, and I have brought a great many things upon myself and others lately by my weakness. Oh! I have been a fool. I might have known no happiness could be found in life’s by-ways. If one begins to make detours from the road of righteousness, disaster is met at every turn.”

“We have encountered nothing calamitous as yet. Don’t work yourself up over this, Grace, I beg of you.”

“What a feeble-minded creature you must begin to think me.”

“Not at all, Grace, dear, I thought it was weak of you, under the circumstances, to have told your affairs to any one, but your gifts and your sacrifices are those of a brave, strong woman. Marsden is the contemptible weakling who has placed us in this anomalous position.”

“The strong should help the weak, but don’t let us discuss Mars now, I feel utterly wretched.”

“Grace, is your wretchedness on account of Marsden? If so, I do not care to stay and commiserate with you.”

“Would you rather I had only self-pity?”

“No, not altogether; you might bestow a little sympathy upon me.”

“I have never thought of you as in need of condolence; you have always commanded my admiration and love.”

“Then I certainly can’t complain of my portion, dearest. Come, let us get out and forget all the morning’s excitement.”

Grace agreed sweetly but inanimately, and

wearily dragged herself up the stairs to get ready to go.

"Put on something warm," Clayton called up to her. "I think a spin in the country will do you good."

Grace slipped on her motor coat, but with none of her usual pleasant anticipation. Every one seemed to be reproaching her for something and her conscience chided constantly.

"Is that the warmest wrap you have?" asked Clayton, when Grace joined him.

"Yes," she answered, "and it is most adequate."

"That may be, but I see how we will put in tomorrow morning. I want you to have a handsome fur coat. Chinchilla would be becoming to you."

"I love chinchilla, but I do not need a fur coat of any description."

"You never need or want anything. Just feel the cold air," he said, as he opened the door. "I wish you had your fur coat today."

"I am such a terrible expense to you," said Grace, as they drove along, "that any additional burden hurts me too much to make it enjoyable."

"You have never been an appreciable expense," Clayton replied. "The only 'burden,' if you wish to call it that, has been Marsden. His demands have sent me along pretty well; but you, for whom it would be a pleasure to spend money, refuse everything."

"It has been on my account, dear, that you have had to meet the demands of Marsden."

"That, of course, is true, but you have derived no benefit from it. That scoundrel has

played his cards well. I don't believe, at this moment, he has the remotest idea of considering any divorce. He knows better than to kill the goose that lays such golden eggs."

"Am I the goose?"

"No, I think I am. If I stay, I must keep on laying. If I go, he still has the nest egg to attract another goose."

"Oh! Edward, what must you think of me to say such a thing as that! Do you think me bereft of feeling as well as reason?"

"Forgive me, dear, I am only thinking of him and his attitude. It is a disagreeable subject. I should not have started it."

"But, Edward, you imply that I am—. Oh! what is it you really think of me?"

"The dearest woman in the world in the hands of a spoiler."

"I was unspoiled until you came. Aren't we too lenient with ourselves and too severe on him?"

"He saw the opportunity too quickly and handled it too well for accident. He had probably been on the lookout for some such opening for a long time, but your devotion to him narrowed his chances."

"Oh! I cannot believe it. It is all so terrible and degrading."

"Don't you see, dear, there is no depth of degradation to which he would not drag you to get you to produce for him? Is there anything he has left undone? Is there any woman on earth who would ask further proof of a man's absolute perfidy?"

"Did he offer me to you?"

“No, but he gave me every evidence that the bars were down.”

“And did you make love to me then because you felt sure of an easy conquest?” Grace asked, constrainedly.

“No, you know that was not the reason, Grace; but why are you putting me on the defensive? Am I assuming the form of the culprit in your eyes now?”

“No, but I feel debased when you speak of the possibility of a man renting or selling me. I loved you and gave myself to you because of that great love, not because I had a complacent husband, and I prefer to stand before you the adulteress, rather than the woman licensed to love by her husband.”

“What mad talk is this, dearest?”

“It is not mad talk! You did not buy my love, I gave it and Marsden had no part in the act, give him his due.”

“Grace, no man can serve two masters. We have the highest authority for that statement. You are evidently torn by a conflict of emotions which I do not like to analyze. One thing is sure, no woman ever loved two men at the same time. You say you love me, but you do not despise the other, who is lost to all sense of honor and decency. It is obvious to every one but you. You persist in finding excuses for him, ‘ad nauseum.’ What does this championing of him mean?”

“I was not defending him just now, but my love for you. No matter what money transactions you have had with Mars, it does not make my love negotiable, but you don’t seem to see it.”

"Grace, I am afraid you are commencing to feel resentment at my having come into your life. You have said some dreadfully cutting things to me today."

"My feelings have been lacerated too, Edward."

"I am sorry for that. I had no desire to wound you."

"And I had no wish to hurt you."

"No, I suppose not, Grace, but we must be getting to a perilous state, when we can't talk things over without making each other wretched."

"If that is all my society affords you now, why go on?"

"It is too late for us even to discuss turning back, but I hope we may go on without quarreling. I should hate to look forward to a life of contention."

"It is not too late to turn back if the prospect is not pleasing."

"What do you mean?" cried Edward, "you have nothing to turn back to."

"You have, and it is not incumbent upon you to worry about me."

"I can only think you do wish to retrace your steps when you talk to me like this. If you do want to return to Marsden we don't have to have a row. You have only to say the word and I will abdicate."

Grace made several attempts to answer, but was unable to get sufficient self-control to speak.

Clayton, angered by her silence, turned the car around and ran her home.

"If you don't mind, I won't come in for lunch," he said, as he helped her out of the

car. "And this evening I am dining with Thurston."

"All right," replied Grace, turning her face away to keep Clayton from seeing the tears that were rushing to her eyes again.

Grace told the maid that she did not wish any luncheon and hurried up to her room.

Life was growing more and more intricate. How could she stand its complications if she and Edward were going to quarrel? If he could only see that love was the one justification of her life with him and not Marsden's actions.

What a horrible morning it had been. First the humiliation of Arthur's denouncement, then the misery of having Edward angry. There was so much bitter with the sweet now that life was becoming acrid. It had been unnatural from the beginning. Her childhood spent with soured old people had robbed her youth of all its laughter. Now love had come to her too late to bloom without blight.

Clayton went to his Club for luncheon and remained there all afternoon. Talking with first one and then another of his acquaintances and playing several games of pool made the time pass very quickly. Later he went to his flat and had Wilson get out an old evening suit which he got into and told him he would be returning there for the night. He felt it would do Grace good to have an uninterrupted chance to think things over.

In his moments of reflection he saw the harshness of his criticism of her attitude towards Marsden. If one likes certain qualities in a woman they must take what goes with those qualities. No woman could be a sweet, cling-

ing vine to one man and an avenging Nemesis to another. The point was to get her away from Marsden at the earliest possible moment and he would perhaps be easier to deal with at a distance; he could surely be no worse. With Grace out of Marsden's clutches, they could afford to wait awhile. When the scoundrel saw he had lost her finally, he would take his price and quit. There was little danger of his coming to America, or being able to stay if he did. New York was beckoning and began to look nearer.

He had made delightful friends in London, but the very best of these, the Thurstons, were booked for America on the 31st, three days off. Any ship after theirs would answer his purpose perfectly. One fine day Marsden would find the nest empty and the birds flown. It might be better to send Grace on a ship ahead of himself, under an assumed name. He would decide that later. The obvious thing now was to cheer Grace up. Love, he reasoned, may be as undying as poets would have us believe, but love in tears was not satisfying. There must be no more of them. Sunshine, nothing else from now until the ship sailed. Once out of London their sky would not be so overcast. The Grays, he was sure, would take Grace under their wing and he would see to it that there was no chance for scandal.

In spite of the upsetting morning he had a very pleasant afternoon and evening. He was sorry he had not returned to the house but he felt his being able to think things out alone would be productive of good. The first thing he would do in the morning would be to get Grace the handsomest fur coat he could find

in town. He fell asleep making a mental list of the things he would get to please her on the morrow.

In spite of Grace's night of wretchedness, she responded with all the sweetness of her nature to Clayton's effort to start the day pleasantly when he joined her at breakfast.

When he suggested that they leave immediately after their coffee on a hunt for fur coats and things, she acquiesced with such apparent delight, that he was convinced anew that pretty clothes were magic to banish lovely women's tears, and permit one to bask in the sunshine of their smiles.

XXI

An aristocratic appearance was Marsden's only inheritance from a noble ancestry. There was no trace of any good hereditary strain in his character, but it was hard for Grace, when she looked at him or visualized him, to think he was all bad. She could not credit him with the base criminality that Clayton did. Still sorry for him, she thought circumstances largely responsible for his wrong doing. In her self-incriminating moods, she assumed the role of chief offender. She hoped that when she went out of his life he would succeed and be well thought of.

She was hoping for his welfare when he startled her by his sudden appearance. It was the middle of the week and she knew something serious must be the matter to bring him to town.

"What has happened?" she asked, rising as he walked hurriedly over to her.

"Never mind what has happened, but get me one hundred and fifty pounds quickly."

"I can't, you know I can't. Edward was furious when he found out about my check to you for two hundred pounds before. If there is anything dreadful, go to him yourself. He will help you, I know."

"Help me," he laughed derisively, "he wants to help me disgrace myself till I become an out-cast and he be considered a hero in marrying my neglected and abused wife. That's all the money I get goes for. Clayton seems to think

I can get a woman to brand herself for his benefit for a few pounds. I am desperate today and have got to have money, do you understand? Got to."

"Mars, I have very little money in the bank, and besides I have promised not to give you money again. I cannot, dare not, break my promise."

"You talk to me about not wanting to break a promise—you who have broken the promises—the supposedly sacred promises made at the altar."

"Stop, Mars. I will not listen to you. I will not take his money to give to you again and be made a liar and a cheat."

"You gave to him what belonged to me. Stop being such a hypocrite. I tell you I have got to have one hundred and fifty pounds and the sooner you get it for me the better."

"I cannot and will not," gasped Grace, sinking into her chair.

"Will you receipt for the fur coat?" the maid said entering the room with a huge box.

"How do you expect to pay for fur coats out of a depleted bank account," asked Marsden as soon as the maid had left.

"I don't. Edward insisted upon giving it to me yesterday and made me take the cash to pay for it. My bill is all paid up there now."

"Grace," said Marsden impressively, leaning over her, "I want to talk with you without these interruptions. Will you at least condescend to take a walk with me?"

"Yes, if you wish it."

"Well, get your things on quickly, I have got

to get back. It takes time even running my own motor."

Grace left the room, trembling from head to foot, but she could not refuse to talk to him. When she returned to the sitting room he had left. She walked down to the front door and looked out on the street; his car was gone. Evidently he had decided it was not worth while talking to her. She returned to her room exhausted and worn out, but fearful lest Edward would return and think she did not care very much for her coat if he saw the box unopened. She returned to the sitting room for it. The box was not there so she rang for the maid to bring it to her.

"I have not touched it, Ma'am," she said, "since I brought it in to you."

Grace was bewildered. Could it be possible Mars had taken it? Had he sunk so low as to take her clothes to pawn them? Before she could think things out she heard Edward coming in the house and his first words on entering the room were concerning the arrival of her new fur coat.

"Yes," she answered, but seeing his look of expectancy she added, "but I returned it for some alterations. I should have it by tomorrow."

She would get Marsden on the telephone and make him tell her where he had taken it. She would shield him this once. He must have been desperate and no one must know that he had turned thief.

After luncheon she looked so badly that Clayton suggested their taking a ride, but she said she preferred going to her room. As soon as

Clayton went out she rang for a messenger and wired Marsden to call her up at once and also put in a call for him. She had received no response from either by the time Clayton returned. He wanted to take her out to dinner, but she begged him to go alone, or hunt up some friends as she was not up to going out.

"I am sorry you are not well and will not dream of going out but will stay here with you."

"No, no, Edward, please go out. I will feel so much more free to rest."

"Very well," he said, "I will telephone Thurston and see if he and Dariel will dine with me. I owe them some attention."

"Do," said Grace, relieved.

As soon as she was left alone, she frantically kept trying to get Marsden on the telephone; there was nothing she could do until she heard from him. He would not be coming to town until Saturday and what could she do all tomorrow to avoid the discussion of the coat. It was maddening. How much she wondered had Mars borrowed on it. If only she had not uttered the lie that had rushed to her lips to shield him. This suspense would kill her.

As the time drew near for Clayton's return she hurriedly got in bed and put out the lights so he would think her asleep. Long after she heard him come in and go to his room, she lay on her bed in mental anguish.

Pleading a violent headache, she did not leave her room in the morning.

Clayton wandered around the house disconsolately until time to go to a farewell luncheon given for Thurston at the Club. It was a jolly affair and when he left the merry-makers he

was in high spirits. The afternoon was clear and sunny and he felt sure the thing for Grace was some fresh air. He would make her come for a ride.

With this in mind, he got in his car and headed for Lucille's to get her coat. It could not have needed much of anything done to it, as it looked marvelously well on her.

Locating the saleswoman from whom they had bought it, he said, "Mrs. Marsden asked me to stop for her coat, the alterations are doubtless completed by now."

"Alterations! Why that is very strange; Mr. Marsden brought the wrap back shortly after it was delivered to Madam and said he did not like it and would bring Mrs. Marsden in to select something else."

For a moment Clayton was too dumbfounded to speak.

When he found his voice he said, "Indeed, I must have misunderstood Mrs. Marsden. It must be her new selection she wished me to get for her."

"It is not here, Sir. She must have found what she wanted at some other place."

"But I thought I saw Mrs. Marsden pay you cash for the coat."

"She did, Sir; but the money was refunded at Mr. Marsden's request."

"Then I have gotten Mrs. Marsden's commission all balled up," he said.

Clayton walked out of the shop a crushed man. He felt old from the blow his discovery had given him.

Had any man ever made a greater fool of himself over a woman? Evidently Grace ex-

pected with a few more tears and protestations to smooth this out and turn some new trick for Marsden. How convenient those tears had been, an unfailing supply always on tap. Doubtless, the moment his back was turned they changed to smiles. This precious pair had worked him to the queen's taste. Women in the drawing room and women in the street have much the same instincts. Some crooked stick was picked out as an object for worship and all the other men were a means to an end. He had served their purposes coming and going. As a husband he had been deceived, and as a lover again deluded.

As he drove along he was filled with a loathing for the two and overwhelmed with a sense of utter loneliness. He must get away from it all, back to where he would have something to occupy his mind. He drove to Cook's and asked for a stateroom on the first ship sailing for New York.

"The boat train leaves at 7 A. M. tomorrow morning," the clerk told him as he handed him his ticket. He rushed from there to the bank and attended to everything necessary for his departure in the morning; then he went to his flat.

Wilson received his master's orders to pack him up for America with no expression of surprise, but his mournful countenance made an appeal to Clayton, and with a desire to have some human attention, said, "I'll take you along if you wish to go, Wilson."

"Very good, Sir," he replied with a beaming face, "and I hope, Sir, in your own country, you'll be needing me more."

“I think I will,” Clayton said as he sat down at his desk to gather up his papers and letters. While he worked he struggled to make up his mind what to do in regard to Grace. One moment he was filled with a desire to go to her and tell her what he thought of her deception and lies; the next he felt he never wanted to see her again.

He finally decided that the only thing to do was to write her. His things had to be gotten away from there and Wilson could deliver the letter when he went after them. But, then if she knew this evening of his intention to sail she might seek an interview before morning. He would simply send Wilson to get his belongings without any detailed account of his plans. He would post his letter to her.

XXII

Grace was thankful that Edward had had the luncheon to go to, and that he was evidently enjoying his afternoon with Thurston. She had given up hope of Marsden's allowing her the opportunity to speak to him until he came to town the next day, but there was not much chance of any complications arising about the coat that night, so she dressed herself in one of Edward's favorite gowns, longing to make up, in every way, for the deception she had been forced to practice. If only she could get out of this difficulty she would never again, under any circumstances, lie to Edward.

She was disappointed when she realized Edward was not coming home to dinner and a little hurt that he had not telephoned. Appetite had deserted her, but she felt faint for food, so struggled through her dinner alone. If she could only be certain the men were going to make a night of it, she would take a taxi and have the pleasure of talking to Mrs. Thurston and Dariel once more. She was going to miss Mrs. Thurston terribly. She had been more a mother to her than any one she had ever known. The bare possibility of Edward's returning home deterred her and she decided to get her music out and practice until he did come.

While she played, Wilson presented himself at the side door and asked to go to his master's room to fetch some things. It was the cook's

evening to stay in and she did not consider it necessary to notify Mrs. Marsden of Wilson's call. So while Grace played and made resolutions, Wilson removed from the house all the visible traces of Clayton's occupancy.

Grace played on and on until her fingers refused to obey, but it was not until nearly two o'clock that she gave up waiting to welcome him downstairs.

By daybreak she fell asleep, convinced that the party had kept up so late that Edward had decided to go to his flat and would come over for breakfast. At nine o'clock the servants were discussing Mr. Clayton's sudden departure. The cook recounting Wilson's call, had sent the house maid up to his room to investigate. When at 9.30 no one had appeared for breakfast she decided that since the guest had departed, her madam wished to resume her custom of having breakfast in her room, so she fixed a tray and took it, with the mail, up to Mrs. Marsden. When she had placed the tray on the table by her side, she pushed up the curtains letting in the light, which always awakened her mistress immediately, and then left the room.

Grace soon opened her eyes and was provoked to think that she must have overslept herself and again missed Clayton at breakfast. She was just about to ring to find out if he had come in for breakfast when her eyes fell on his letter to her. Incredulously she picked it up and read:

“Dear Grace:

“When you receive this letter, I shall be on

my way to America. I hope your loyalty and devotion to your husband's interest will compensate you for any loss you may feel at my dropping out. If you ever need anything for yourself, that is not to be just converted into money for your husband to squander, call on me. I will never fail you if you are alone and in need of help.

“Edward.”

No tears came to soften the cruelest blow of her life. She looked dry-eyed into space and the letter dropped from her nerveless fingers. Mechanically she walked to his room as if to get further proof of his departure. Shorn of all his personal effects, the room filled her with the chill and horror of a sepulchre, but she turned the key in the door and walked its floor for hours; her grief was too great to permit tears.

She paced up and down, numb with despair, then gradually the future forced itself upon her notice, grim and foreboding. What was life without love? How had she dared to run the risk of losing it? Surely not to expect gratitude or appreciation from Mars. Then the realization that he would soon return spurred her to action. If she had to go on what was she to do?

She went back to her room and dressed with feverish haste for the dreaded interview; and, for some unaccountable reason, recalling the days when she had looked forward to his coming with pleasure. Dressed, she went downstairs to await his arrival.

“Hello,” Marsden said almost cheerfully,

when he breezed into the drawing room.
“Where’s Clayton?”

Grace did not reply, but handed him the letter.

“What was the trouble?” he asked anxiously.

“The coat. Why did you do it?”

“I told you I had to have money. You refused me and left no other course.”

“What did you do with it?”

“Took it back to the shop and got the money.”

At once Grace saw the whole situation. Edward was not to blame, only she herself and her inexcusable lie. Oh, if she had only told him the whole truth at once. Mars was a thief. It was not her fault that he was and Edward would never have blamed her for it. His whole manner after their unpleasantness had been so sweet and reassuring, so plainly desirous of her happiness at any cost and she had thrown it all away. The thought was madness.

“Well, what are you going to do about it?” broke in Marsden, after a long pause.

“I am going to work,” replied Grace quietly.

“Ha, ha, ha,” laughed Marsden. “Who are you going to work?”

“Not you, or for you,” replied Grace. “Nothing honest appeals to you. Yours is a life of infamy.”

“Be careful what you say.”

“Oh, no, it doesn’t matter much what I say, it is what I do from now on that will count,” she replied quietly.

“Cheer up, old girl,” said he, coming over and patting her on the shoulder. “Things are never as bad as they seem at first. We will

land another easy one soon and be going again."

It was true! Edward was always right and this beast, calling himself her husband, this man for whose protection she had lost everything dear in life, expected her to offer herself for sale like a woman of the street, to solicit support for himself and incidentally herself. Edward had known it, but in her blindness she had refused to see it or believe him.

"Get out of my sight," she cried, "I never want to see your face again. Until I leave this house its doors will be closed to you. You fill me with loathing and contempt."

"It will not be necessary for you to make your feelings for me any more clearly understood. After this week-end I shall not come up to London for its gayety."

After seeing Marsden, the outlook did not seem so black. All she would have to do was to cable Edward she was coming to him. What did she care for divorce or anything in the world but to be with the man she loved? He had thought her a party to the coat transaction but she could soon convince him that was not the case. After all, nothing had changed. Edward had gone off but she could follow and now Marsden would not be a factor in their lives. She had seen for herself this time what he was.

She got out the papers and looked up the ships' sailings. She was trying to write out a comprehensive cable to Edward, when Marsden returned.

"I just ran into Sullivan, who went to the ship to see the Thurston's off, and he tells me he saw Clayton and Wilson getting aboard, too. Clayton, he said, had been giving Dariel a ter-

rible rush and he supposed at the last moment could not see her go. I think, myself, Grace, his fury and departure were pretty well timed. In view of this, does what you said to me an hour ago stand?"

"Absolutely," she said firmly, but every vestige of color had left her face and she felt as if the floor were slipping from under her.

"As you wish," Marsden said, as he turned and left the house.

Grief stricken, Grace tore into bits the cable she had been writing, realizing the little scraps of paper were the debris of hope.

XXIII

In the chagrin and bitterness of his leave-taking, it was not until Clayton was on the train that he examined his tickets carefully and saw that his ship was the *Aquitania*. Could anything have been more propitious? The life with Grace should be made to fade away like a bad dream and to assist its departure, he would devote himself to Dariel to the limit. She was bright and clever and, as a consolation friend, left nothing to be desired.

It was true she had looked at him that night in the hall as though she was taking him pretty seriously, but a little of that sort of thing did women good, wore off the sharp corners of conceit and arrogance and was really a service to the men they actually married. His compliments to the sex in general. He would assist in their education. He would be a gay Lothario and forget.

Arrived on board, Clayton merely glanced at his cabin and left Wilson in charge. He proceeded to the upper deck, found a steward and procured a chair which he asked to be placed aft. Seating himself, he took out a cigar and lighted it. Ideally placed for a delightful meditation, he mused derisively, trying to concentrate his thoughts on his business.

He did not want to go over the harrowing experiences of the last few months abroad. They were to be added to the other chapters of his disillusion; but, as he sat there watching

England's landmarks fade from his vision, the scenes enacted there forced themselves upon him as the distance widened between him and her shores—he was saddened. Softened by his own unhappiness, he felt a wave of pity for Grace. He rose impulsively to send her a wireless but before he reached the operator he realized the hopelessness of trying to send a message that would rob his going of the sting. He could not go back and more mere words were useless. What an emotional ass he was turning into. He turned abruptly to face Dariel and her brother.

“Where on earth did you come from?” she exclaimed, the first to recover from the unexpected meeting.

“Sh—. I am a messenger from Mars,” replied Clayton.

“Not fallen from Grace, I hope,” retorted Dariel.

“No,” laughed Clayton. “The fact is, I was suddenly forced to return to America and nearly broke my neck to catch this ship in order to be with you.”

“I am most awfully glad you did catch this boat and apparently unharmed. Come and speak to mother. She will be so surprised.”

“By Jove, it is topping having you along with us, Clayton,” added Thurston. “It will make no end of difference in the pleasure of the trip.”

Mrs. Thurston expressed her delight at the addition of Clayton to their party and he was flattered and pleased at the genuine cordiality of their welcome.

“Come along and walk with us a little while, Mr. Clayton. Horace and I were just starting

to stretch our legs after that cramped train journey."

The three walked around the deck several times, then Horace dropped out and sat down by his mother.

"When are you returning to England?" asked Dariel.

"When you do," gallantly replied Clayton.

"I believe you are a gay deceiver. Once you asked me how I kept from falling in love with you. If you want to know, it is because you make too many pretty speeches to be sincere."

"Has that question of mine been rankling ever since, Miss Dariel? I was so repentant of that conceited remark I did penance by staying away from you for quite a while. May I have absolution now please?"

"You are absolved, dear man, if your contrition is real. Still you haven't answered my question. When do you return to England, really?"

"I have no intention of going back there. The reason for my stay no longer exists. I have had a delightful holiday and now it is over."

"And Grace, is her infatuation for you over, too?"

"You are wrong there. There was no infatuation. Grace and her husband understood each other thoroughly. They are absolutely united in their interests and their singleness of purpose, precluding any outsider being more than an incident."

"Your tone and your words sound bitter. I am sorry to have brought up the subject."

Clayton was annoyed at himself for having

displayed so much feeling and was grateful for the interruption of the gong which reminded them of the necessity to dress for dinner and brought their conversation to an end.

Clayton had forgotten all about his seat in the dining saloon but found Thurston had arranged for him to sit with them. Dariel looked especially fresh and blooming in her decollete evening gown. Clayton's mind had been so engrossed with Grace that he had not noticed Dariel with particular interest before. She was assuredly a most unusually attractive girl, magnificently alive, and in superb physical condition. Her dressing was quiet and really plain, but it did not require much imagination to picture the result after some Fifth Avenue shop had fitted her out. Clayton had acquired a smattering on dress and added to it recently while shopping with Grace. It was an expensive but fascinating pastime.

"I have not seen much of you today, Clayton," Thurston said as he took his seat, "but after dinner we will go to the smoking room and have a chat."

"Oh, no, you won't," broke in Dariel. "Mr. Clayton is going to take me up to watch the dancing, aren't you?"

"Smoking—dancing," ruminated Clayton aloud, "of two evils, choose the lesser. Smoking is a pernicious habit, Thurston. In order to discourage it, I believe I should go to the dance. Let us stroll in the early morning before the ladies are up."

"Done," agreed Thurston. "Let's call it seven o'clock."

Dariel and Clayton watched those dancing

some little time in silence. Finally Clayton said, "I am sorry I am not much good at these modern dances."

"Neither am I," replied Dariel. "They are interesting to watch but I don't believe I should care for them, that is, not promiscuously."

"Well, so long as neither of us are keen about dancing, let's sit on deck."

It was a beautiful moonlight night, mild, with wind abaft, giving the effect of almost stillness except for the hissing of the water against the sides of the ship. They found their chairs and rugs and after Dariel had been tucked in with great care and solicitude, she said, "Mr. Clayton, you are a most interesting and, I am afraid, a most dangerous man, yet in spite of my fears I am hovering around like the proverbial moth."

"What subtle flattery. I can think of nothing more calculated to make the bosom of the village youth swell with pride than to be called 'dangerous.' With what special brand of peril am I labeled?"

"To begin with, you are a woman's man. You can no more live without them than you could without air. Men may occupy your business moments but all your relaxation must include women, or woman, I am not sure which."

"And does that make me unsafe?"

"Yes, if you prefer the plural to the singular."

"You don't believe there is safety in numbers?"

"Not for the numbers."

"You could never be just a number."

"But we were not discussing me."

"True, and you are quite right about my

admiration for the fair sex, but I enjoy domesticity and the atmosphere of a home and I only want the undivided attention of one woman. I really don't ask to be adored, only liked for myself alone. I have seen so much of love for revenue only, in my life that I am supersensitive on that point."

"Does it occur to you that what you describe as your requirements would most properly fit a good housekeeper, not a wife? Most women want to be made love to, told charming things about themselves, which if not true are just as delightful as if they were. To be looked at as a hungry dog looks at a bone, to feel themselves desired, demanded, kidnapped, if you understand, that is what women regard as love and what leads them to unutterable things. I suppose it doesn't last and few realize it, but we all dream about it and long for it."

"I see, the prehistoric maiden demands a cave man. I could love a woman, but I could never learn to maul her. Do you mind if I smoke?"

"Not at all. I should like to have one with you."

They smoked their cigarettes in silence, each wondering what the other's thoughts were.

XXIV

Next morning the weather was bad. Clayton and Thurston tried their early walk, but the sea was rough, a heavy spray flying and the starboard deck most unpleasant. On the lee side, the list of the ship, with its rolling and pitching made walking almost equally undesirable. The decks were deserted. They found the smoking room almost the same. Thurston ordered whiskey and soda in which Clayton declined to join. After a few moments Thurston rose, saying, "By Jove, Clayton, I must bolt for my cabin or I'll be sick."

"I was afraid of that drink on an empty stomach unless you are a wonderful sailor," replied Clayton.

Left alone, Clayton wandered about feeling far from his usual self. He was not sick but felt wretched. The longer he walked the less he felt like breakfast; in fact, the idea of food was repulsive. This western trip was far from what its predecessor had been. The wind was evidently increasing too, as the ship was pitching more violently. He went to his stateroom and stretched out on his bed. In a few moments he felt much better and decided to stay there.

At about eleven he rang for Wilson who came with an alarmed "Are you ill, Sir?"

"No," replied Clayton, "and I don't intend to be, so I shall stay right here until this old tub stops her nonsense."

All that day he remained there perfectly con-

tent to let well enough alone. The opportunity for reflection was, he thought, most timely. What a wonderful diagnostician Dariel was. She knew him even better than he did himself. He was just what she described. Club or hotel life did not appeal to him and a woman's touch was what his whole nature demanded. He could stand the delays of pursuit, but the inactivity connected with having no goal in sight was unendurable. He had always heard and believed that wives generally were true but never mistresses. His experience with wives hardly bore this out; what would it be with a mistress?

No, he must have a wife; and, after all, the point was in having one who would love him. Just so her appearance was most creditable and her social qualifications above criticism, the rest mattered little. It might be in ordinary matters "more blessed to give than to receive," but for a change, in love, he preferred to be receiver. He had tried being giver and found it wanting.

Back and forth his mind went over this problem, always to the same result. If he had his choice, Grace's type represented everything he loved. He had never seen any one who appealed to him so strongly. Her apparent blind willingness to follow him to perdition itself satisfied every demand of his vanity. There must have been something in it, he reasoned. No actress could be so consummate and so unfailing, but Marsden had married her; and, while she had probably loved himself, her exaggerated idea of duty to one who had had any claim on her made her vacillate in a way that maddened and compelled him to abdicate. Here was this splendid specimen, playing moth, as she had so

aptly said. It was probably true that she had never loved and whoever came first stood a good chance to remain the only one. She had shown him that night in the hall that his arms would not have been rejected. Well, here he was, true to her analysis, barely out of the frying pan and gazing wistfully at the fire.

The next day showed no change in weather until late in the afternoon when the sun came out, and although the sea was rough, Clayton decided to risk the deck. By following his plan he had not really been ill a moment and had, after the two days' study, decided to take the first opportunity to drive hard at Dariel before reaching New York and decide from her reception of his advances whether he wanted her or not. There would never be an opportunity such as the ship offered. The romance of it all if once lost, would result in a friendship only, from which no flame could well be kindled.

He found a few chair occupants, some with trays of food beside them, more or less untouched, and all looking unhappy. He settled down in his steamer chair with the book he had brought, to await some member of the Thurston family. Just as the sun was setting, Dariel came along alone.

Clayton spoke first, "Where have you been these two days?"

"Oh, mother and brother have been dreadfully ill. Between the two I have not been able to come out at all. I even had my meals sent in so as not to leave mother. The doctor said we must watch her closely on account of her heart. Hasn't the weather been awful?"

“It certainly has,” replied Clayton with feeling. “And you were not ill at all?”

“Not for a moment. I should have loved it if I had been alone.”

Clayton made a note that their honeymoon, if it ever came, would not include an ocean trip.

“Well, it has been terribly lonesome and I believe I enjoy good weather and moonlight better. How is your mother now?”

“Much improved. The stewardess says that in another hour we shall probably be in perfectly smooth water.”

“Then I may look for you at dinner?”

“Yes, but I don’t believe Horace will appear before tomorrow. I just came up for a breath of air and must go right back. Good-bye.”

After dinner Dariel and Clayton went out on deck. It was quite cold and Clayton adjusted her heavy cape with extreme care.

“How lovely,” said Dariel. “I believe this is the first time I have ever permitted a man to do anything like that for me. I suppose you think I am a born Amazon, but really I am not. I have seen so much mock love about, that I’ve agreed with the woman who said, ‘The more she saw of men the better she liked dogs.’”

“You are quite fond of dogs?” asked Clayton, when they were seated in their chairs.

“Don’t be silly, I like men, every woman does, but a man must first show me that he is one. No mere male could paw his way into my heart.”

“A real man would not be good at that. He would rather expect the woman to do the pet-

ting—to mother him if you will. Whether you think me one or not—that is what would appeal to me. I've never heard a sentiment that struck me so forcibly as the toast on 'woman, our arms in their defense, their arms our recompense.' After a man battles with the world all day, he does not want to come home to battle with a woman."

"Edward Clayton, you are the most wonderful man I ever knew. You talk so convincingly and appealingly that you would make any listener believe black was white. No wonder you have been such a success in life."

"Success—did you say? I have just been counting up my failures. I have made money, yes, but any fool can do that in a greater or less degree. Opportunity does some of it and Providence the rest. To some He gives and from some He takes away. No man is in himself a success."

He did not look at Dariel while speaking, nor for a moment after; but, realizing the silence, he turned to her and again saw that light in her eyes which had oppressed him once before. He was free now and it looked as if this girl loved him. He must be certain, however; he had just been warned about the paws.

"Don't you think I am right?" he asked, leaning close to her face.

"I think you are the noblest character I have ever known," she replied.

"Could you mother a character like that?" leaning a little closer.

"I could, old dear," she said, putting her hand on his arm. "You are in need of a little mothering."

“And love, too?” he added, taking her hand in both of his.

“But not mine, just now,” she faltered, as she gently withdrew her hand from his. “Don’t try to make yourself fall in love with some one just for consolation. I don’t know what has taken you away from Grace, but it was not I.”

“No, it was not you, Dariel; but, admitting that I did love Grace, does that fact, now that it is all over, prevent your caring for me?”

“No, but the three of us must be sure that it is all over before I will allow myself to care for you. No one could be happy at the expense of another’s unhappiness.”

“What a noble girl you are, Dariel. You must think a little something of me to talk to me as you have. What would you like me to do?”

“Wait awhile and see if you and Grace can adjust your lives contentedly apart. If you find you can—take another holiday and come to Canada.”

Before Clayton could answer, Dariel sprang up saying, “Good-night, I must not stay away from mother any longer.”

Clayton rose and took her hand in silence with a thousand things he wanted to say left unsaid. What a girl she was. Why had he not fallen in love with her instead of with Grace, and every one would have been spared all the wretchedness and unhappiness. Could he really adjust his life contentedly apart from Grace? He had loved her as he could love no other woman. Yet, what was this feeling he had for Dariel? He had wildly planned to have a mad

flirtation on this trip, but when he was with her he had no such thoughts. What a mess of complications and contradictions his whole life was.

XXV

It was evident to Clayton that Dariel wished to avoid any more tête-a-tête with him. She was as cordial and sweet as ever but her extreme care to keep with either her mother or brother was apparent.

Thurston had met two other Army men on board, Captain Desmond, returning to Canada and Captain Andrews, on his way to Vancouver, who were constantly joining their party now.

"What do you say to a game of bridge?" asked Desmond as he and Andrews halted in front of Dariel's chair.

"A good idea, what?" added Andrews.

"Yes, let us have a game," agreed Dariel. "We can have a little tournament among ourselves and play every day until we reach New York."

"With prizes and all that sort of thing, what?" interpolated Andrews.

"A first prize and a booby prize," Dariel stipulated.

"And, Mother, so long as you are not going to be one of the competitors you can give the prizes. There are topping things to be had from the barber."

"Very well, but I wish I knew who the winners were going to be, before I make my selections."

"I am sure to fall heir to the booby prize, Mrs. Thurston," Clayton said, "choose something appropriate for me."

"A book on bridge would be a subtle booby, what?" Andrews said in an aside to Mrs. Thurston.

Dariel gave her mother's rug a few unnecessary tucks and they all went in to play. A table and cards were procured and they cut first to see who would play, then for partners. Desmond was high man, so he had to be the onlooker for the first rubber. Clayton drew Dariel for his partner as he hoped he would. He was not the indifferent player he insisted upon calling himself, and Dariel was really a very good one and very keen. They played well together and had some interesting hands but luck was against them.

"By Jove, that was top hole," Thurston cried at the close of the rubber. He had been dummy in the final hand and had been watching with great interest the deciding game. "You played that in a masterly fashion, Andrews."

"Oh, I'm some player my lad, some player, what?"

"We did not make much of a score together," Dariel remarked to Clayton, "but it was not our fault. Fate was against us, we did all we could with the cards dealt us."

"I'm awfully sorry, Miss Dariel, we'll have our inning yet."

"I wonder," Dariel replied whimsically.

Clayton dropped out for the next rubber and Desmond joined the players.

"Cut for partners," said Andrews, eager to start at once. "By Jove, as we are Thurston, let's give them a terrific beating, what?"

"I'm not contemplating playing a losing game with Miss Thurston," Desmond said, tak-

ing his seat opposite her. "I expect the god of chance to smile on us from the very start."

Dariel looked up at Desmond quizzically. In spite of his drawl and slow movements, he was as keen and quick as a flash, and she wondered if he too could have thought her words to Clayton, a few moments ago in regard to the playing of their hands, was significant, and was having a little fun at her expense.

"My admiration is always for the good loser," she said emphatically.

"My word!" said Andrews, sitting up with a jerk. "I've never crowed a feather's weight, what?"

"I didn't mean to imply you had, old dear," laughed Dariel. "I have no idea whatever brought forth such a remark."

"Two diamonds," said Thurston by way of calling every one to order, and the cards were given undivided attention. It was a long hard-fought battle, won in the end by Dariel and Desmond, but he made no comment upon their victory.

"Now, if I had not finessed the queen of hearts, Thurston," Andrews said, "it would be a different story, what?"

"Of course, it would," Desmond ragged, "but that's the trouble. You have finessed the dear lady for so long that you are now an old grouchy bachelor."

"My word, well, I'd rather have it that way than be the knave all the ladies had finessed, what?"

"Andrews trumped your trick, Desmond," laughed Clayton.

"He did, by Jove!" admitted Desmond, joining in the laugh on himself.

"I've got to have my tea and some fresh air before I can sit in another game," Dariel said.

"I should like to move about too before playing again," said Clayton rising.

"No more cards this afternoon, what?" asked Andrews disappointedly.

"It looks that way," replied Thurston, "but we can have a rubber or two after dinner. Let's all have a stroll now and join the Mater for tea."

"Right-O," chimed Desmond and Andrews, and the three men strolled out behind Dariel and Clayton.

After twice around the deck they stopped to have their tea with Mrs. Thurston. She began at once putting to Desmond all the questions about Canada which she had been thinking up during the afternoon. Meeting a man who had spent two years in the post they were bound for, had been a great pleasure to Mrs. Thurston and she found him a most satisfactory person to question.

"You will be very contented in Canada, Thurston, I am certain. Having your mother and sister with you will make all the difference," Desmond said, after he had been called to testify to everything about the place from its atmosphere to its political temperature. "It's the poor lonely bachelor without any family that finds it a business to carry on."

"And knaves, what?" suggested Andrews.

"And knaves," repeated Desmond. "They have the worst time of the lot. The poor beggars' Sundays are tragic. That is the day that

all good people seem to shut their doors on the poor devils."

"You will have to spend your Sundays with us, Captain Desmond," Mrs. Thurston said. "Our doors are never closed to our friends."

"Then don't be surprised, dear lady, to find a supplicating sinner on your doorstep every Sabbath."

Clayton began to wish Canada was his destination. He wondered how he would get through his Sundays in New York. There was not a household there he could make himself at home in. How utterly alone he really was. He became unconscious of the conversation going on around him and, looking out into space, gave vent to his own thoughts.

Dariel noticed Clayton's withdrawal and watched him concernedly, shocked at his expression. His face in repose showed the traces of intense suffering. Desmond's quick eye noted the look of wistfulness on Dariel's face as she regarded Clayton and he was glad on the whole that they were dropping the American at New York.

XXVI

Since Marsden and Clayton had gone out of her life, Grace had spent feverish days of planning and arranging her affairs so she could leave England and all its associations. She wanted to return to America and go back to Philadelphia where she had spent her childhood, not to seek any of her old friends but to be in the town of her birth and where she could feel at home, hoping among the old familiar scenes to regain some of her lost illusions and ideals, and lead a life that would in some way make amends for her sins.

Even though she had come to see Mars' character in all its hideousness, she did not exonerate herself for the part she had drifted into. Christ had forgiven the woman taken in adultery and told her to go and sin no more. With God's help she would sin no more and by His mercy she would hope for salvation. She tried to put away the thoughts which kept coming in extenuation of her actions.

Hers had not been a love match, but she had always been fond of Mars and, in a way, she was yet. She had mothered him so long as he had permitted it. Surely she had paid fairly well for the folly of her girlish capitulation to his suit. For years she had given him her undivided attention in spite of his churlish acceptance of it. Was this devotion ever appreciated; or, was it, from the very first, the question of her money and at what time in their

married life had he begun to regard her as a future decoy with which to replenish the dwindling cash supply? The question was horrible and yet inescapable. Never could she have been brought to really believe it. Even Edward had failed to absolutely convince her of Mars' perfidy and not until her last interview with Mars had she completely realized that his sole idea was to commercialize her.

Nowhere had she read in her Bible that divorce was permitted to a woman under any circumstances. Only to a man had the Master suggested it in the case of an unfaithful wife. True, she had read in Corinthians that if an unbelieving wife or husband departed from the believing one, he should be allowed to go and the believer was not under bondage in such cases, or, in other words, was free. This was clearly a permission for divorce on the grounds of desertion, but Mars had not deserted her, although his unbelief in all things Scriptural had always been one of her greatest trials.

No, she had sinned enough. She would not further violate God's laws by suing for divorce to which she could only be entitled by a desertion which she, not he, was now creating. To live further with a man who loved her merely as his chattel to mortgage was impossible. That was ended. Love had come into her life to escape her almost before she had tasted it. No doubt, this lie of hers, which had separated her from Edward, was intended by a just Providence to create just that end and prevent her from going on in a career by which happiness was to be bought at perhaps the cost of the hereafter. For that she was trying to be grateful.

Surely in a future life she and Edward would not be separated although they could neither be married or given in marriage. She knew that Edward had the most profound respect for all things sacred.

But now she could never have his help in studying out the hidden things of God, which had appealed so strongly to her before this burst of passion, and eclipsed all other sentiments. What a groveling creature she had been. This was a proper punishment for forgetting God and His ways. In mercy, not anger, He had separated her from her loved one and done it by her own mouth so she could never attribute it to another cause. Surely His ways were those of righteousness and peace.

Peace, what a word that was. "The peace that passeth understanding." That should be her constant prayer. Passion was a stormy sea. Its shores were lined with many wrecks besides hers. She wondered if any bark ever safely navigated it. Jealousies, hatred, revenge, murder, suicide: those were a few of the rocks that infested it. Who escaped—surely very few. Peace was never found on its troubled waters. Those who drifted into the dangers of that sea were the inactive ones.

Edward had told her that in all his busy life he had never really known the first principles of love until he met her. That was during his first period of inactivity. Had she been a woman of occupation, even in sports, like Darius, she was sure she would not have so easily been carried away.

In Philadelphia she would devote her entire energies to the perfection of some accomplish-

ment. She could never hope to forget Edward, but even though he were married, she would pray for him.

She decided to sell her furniture and dispose of the remaining two years of her lease. Both had been purchased with her own money and she thanked God that this little had been left her with which to start life anew. The scarcity of houses in town was acute, which had been most fortunate for her as the agent had been able to let her lease and sell the furniture to an attaché of the Chilian legation who had just been sent to England, and to procure for her an arrangement of half yearly payments in advance. This would tide her over the time it would take to become self-supporting.

When she took stock of her little accomplishments she realized there was hard work ahead of her to bring them up to a point where they could command a salary, but work would be her salvation. She loved Clayton with all her heart and soul and would to her dying day, but she never expected to see him again. She hoped that if Dariel loved him and they did marry, he would find happiness. She would be as much lost to them in Philadelphia as if she were in England.

When all the details of the house were completed she went to the bank and interviewed the manager, arranging to have them send her the payments that would be made to them through their Philadelphia connection. No address was to be given any one, but letters could be forwarded. She made it plain that she wished no one to know of her whereabouts.

She would let their Philadelphia bank know her address when she was settled there.

The next morning she turned her house over to the lessee, two days before her ship sailed from Liverpool. She could not stand the thought of spending them in London in inaction, now that everything was attended to. She must be on her way, so she determined to start immediately for Liverpool. When her luggage was piled on the taxi, she hastily entered and drove away without looking back. All her emotions had spent themselves, she was bereft of all feeling except the desire to go.

Grace took her seat in the train some time before it started. Even the short waiting seemed endless, she felt she would go mad if they did not start. Finally the guard's whistle blew, the door of the carriage was shut and they were off. She looked out of the window; it was a typical London day, foggy, dull, damp and gray. Involuntarily she shivered, but with the motion of the train her tension lessened, she closed her eyes and sent up a prayer for forgetfulness. Soon her whole body relaxed and she slept from sheer nervous exhaustion.

When she arrived in Liverpool she was much calmer and got through the interval of waiting there better than she could have hoped to do in London. It seemed strange to board the big Cunarder all alone and not to have one, in all the crowds seeing their friends off, to wish her *bon voyage*.

Grace made no acquaintances during the crossing but many wondered who the attractive woman was, always sitting alone watching the

horizon. There was something in her manner, to even the most casual observer, that kept them from trying to break in upon her reveries. They thought her evidently a woman suffering from some great sorrow. She was not in mourning but then it was possible she had been obliged to sail before having had time to drape herself in the crêpe that should be the appropriate costume for such apparent grief. Death is supposed to cut the lines of anguish upon our countenances, but, it is, as a rule, our own actions that make the furrows there.

The trip was uneventful. Grace had had no desire to make acquaintances and no one had intruded. The ship was held at quarantine all night, arriving at her dock at ten in the morning. To pass the customs was a simple matter for a British subject on tour—as such she decided it was proper to represent herself. She was still Mars' wife, she must not forget that under any circumstances and thus would be only a visitor in America. The length of that visit, time alone would determine. She hoped it might never end. There was nothing in England for her.

Driving to the station, she thought of Arthur Gray. He had written her a lovely letter from his steamer telling her how sorry he was for his hasty judgment and how much his sympathies had been aroused by Edward's story of her misfortune. She had not replied but it had left a warmth in her heart. She would like to call him up and say a word to him. Surely there could be no reason why not, and he might perhaps, say a word or two of Edward.

She knew there was no danger of any ex-

planation by Edward of his departure from England that would reflect on her. Whatever Edward said to Gray on the subject would surely be kind and well thought out.

He could always be relied on for that. Was there ever a more perfect type of that much abused word "gentleman"?

When she reached the Pennsylvania Station she had a half hour to wait before the next Philadelphia express so she called up his office. Gray's surprise at hearing her voice was not so great as she expected.

His first question was, "Have you and Marsden separated?"

"Yes, but I can't talk about that over the 'phone. I am on my way to Philadelphia and I don't want a living soul anywhere to know my address there except yourself. If you will promise never to give it to any one, I will write it to you as soon as I am settled, and when you come over there sometime on one of your frequent business trips, you can come to see me and we will talk everything over. Will you promise?"

"Why, of course, I will. I am glad you had the moral courage to leave the hound, Grace. Never allow yourself to be cajoled into going back. You are too good a woman to be mixed up with a cur like that. You must divorce him just as soon as you acquire a proper residence, which will not be for two years in Philadelphia, but that will soon pass; and, in Pennsylvania, desertion and cruel treatment can easily be established."

"We can talk that all over when you come. Now remember your promise not to mention

anything about my being there and never to give my address."

"I will, Grace. I appreciate your position."

"Good-bye, Arthur."

"Good-bye, Grace. Be sure to write to me soon."

As the train sped along, the necessity for consideration of at least a temporary location became obvious. At Trenton she bought a Philadelphia afternoon paper. She knew the town well enough to know that nothing suburban would answer her purposes at all, owing to the time necessarily wasted in transportation to the centers of general business activity. She decided that a boarding house of good character and in the neighborhood of Broad and Spruce would be desirable. It was within easy walking distance of everything and, at the same time, would probably be respectable and more or less inexpensive.

She found several advertisements of what she wanted, and selecting two, discovered, on arriving at the first, exactly what she desired. A rather elderly widow with the kindest of smiles, whose husband had been an Englishman, was the owner and manager of the house. She was delighted with Grace and offered her one of the best rooms at a most reasonable rate, saying she could afford to make a reduction for the pleasant promise of being able to talk over London on occasions. This did not appeal to Grace at all, but in every other way the place was most satisfactory.

XXVII

From the day the Aquitania docked in New York, Clayton personally conducted a sight-seeing tour of the city for the Thurstons and their two newly-made friends, Desmond and Andrews. He piloted them from Grant's Tomb to Chinatown, and each night they all dined together, running the gamut of restaurants from the smart, exclusive places to the table d'hôte resorts.

Though he and Dariel were together every day, they really had no opportunities for personal chats. Desmond was literally sticking closer than a brother and their first night on shore had prevailed on Dariel to try a dance with him. Since then their dancing was part of each night's program. When one has once caught the tempo of the dance, it is impossible to keep from swaying with the crowd to the quasi-eastern music. The disturbing plaintive note of the saxophone is a call to arms.

Clayton had put off from day to day seeing Gray on matters of business. He was the first person he ought to see, but on account of his private affairs the last one he desired to see. He hardly knew how to explain things. He could only say that Grace had given him to understand she could not give up Marsden, after all, and that he had left, but he dreaded the cross-examination by that judicial mind of Gray's. He would not take up the threads of business in any event until after the Thurstons

had left. They were going now in two or three days to Washington as they wanted to see the Capitol before leaving the States. They would have to come back to New York en route to Canada, but they most likely would not stop over again.

At first Clayton disliked the idea of opening up his house, but Wilson was so capable and reliable that he decided to do so. Wilson attended to all the details. Clayton told him to get what assistance he needed to run the place and had him rush things along, so as to have everything in readiness to give the Thurstons a farewell dinner in his home.

Wilson seized this first opportunity to show what he could do in preparing for the dinner. His position, heretofore, had been a sinecure, which no first-class English servant enjoys. When Clayton looked in the dining-room before the guests arrived, he was unstinting in his praise of Wilson's preparations.

"I hoped you would be pleased, Sir," said Wilson.

"I am delighted," replied Clayton, "I had no idea you were more than a good valet."

"I began as a butler, Sir, but I prefer traveling."

The Thurstons and their two friends arrived and, in a few moments, were seated around the table.

"How lovely!" exclaimed Dariel. "You don't seem in any immediate need of a hostess to arrange your dining table; or have you one concealed somewhere on the premises?"

"No," replied Clayton, "I've been trying to

get one but my references do not seem to suit the applicants.”

“Ha, Ha,” laughed Andrews. “That’s jolly good, what?”

“You don’t seem to be having things so smooth over here, after all,” said Desmond, turning to Clayton. “I was jolly glad to get out of England with the labor troubles and the Government messing up things and expected everything would be peaceful here, but your papers are reeking with coal strikes, railroad strikes, battles with machine guns between labor and capital and all that, really much worse than it is in England.”

“It is all politics over here and the fear by the office holders of losing the labor vote,” asserted Clayton. “If I were managing the matter, I should leave such differences as those of garment makers, textile workers, et cetera, to settle themselves as they pleased; but not utilities, coal, railroads and similar things. Both sides are working to force the Government to take them over at a preposterous valuation and to pay unthinkable wages. A good plan would be to make each side appoint a committee of, say, five and to lock the ten up on a slender diet, without luxuries, until they had agreed in writing on a basis to last at least two years and containing a proviso that the cost to the public was not to be increased, and then enforce that agreement with all the power of the Government. “One word describes the employers—with a few notable exceptions. They are hogs. The employees are led by men who are drunk, not with wine but with power, the power of numbers of followers. Like the Kaiser, who

thought to overrun civilization with numbers, they expect to trample on public opinion by the terror that a vast following, ready for any method that will achieve their ends, will strike. It can't be done. They would do well to consider the position of the Kaiser and his following today. On the other hand, the employing class could, with advantage, count up the cost of 'canning the Kaiser.' In such a struggle, capital would probably win, but be exhausted and left without the resources to resume production. Then the deluge could be expected."

"Well said, Clayton," cried Thurston and turning to the other men who had been listening attentively, added, "Our host is a utility man himself and knows both sides of that question well. I have enjoyed his ideas on the subject before."

"Let's stick to the service, Desmond," said Andrews. "I'm sure we would both come a cropper the moment we chucked it, what?"

"I'm not so sure," answered Desmond, "but this is boring the ladies."

"Not at all," said Mrs. Thurston. "In this age of enlightenment, we women are as much interested in these things as the men."

"Are you one of those 'few notable exceptions' you just referred to as among the employing class?" asked Dariel of Clayton.

"No, I am sorry to say. I am only a stockholder and have no direct contact with the employees," he replied. "I am not even an officer of the corporation."

"And too timid to suggest to your associates your well thought out remedies?" asked she.

"That, Miss Dariel, is a well-deserved re-

buke. I do seem to have sadly lacked the courage of my convictions lately and it is the duty of a true friend to call it to my attention. Gentlemen, I ask you to join me in a rising toast to the girl who has had the courage to show her friendship for an undeserving man, by a second time setting his sins in order before him."

The men responded immediately, but Mrs. Thurston looked annoyed and disturbed.

"Mr. Clayton," she said, when the men had resumed their seats, "my daughter must be most annoying with her unasked advice. Her remark a moment ago was unnecessary and I feel that I should apologize for her attack on your business affairs. Your saying that it is her second offense, grieves me very much. Friends are not made or kept by criticism before others. I hope you will accept my apology for her."

"My dear Mrs. Thurston, your daughter needs no apologist. I had forgotten the presence of any one when I mentioned its being the second time she had favored me. I may say that on the previous occasion no one else was present and the advice she gave me was perhaps the best I have ever had in my life. I cannot recall any friend who has been of greater benefit to me."

"Oh, I say," broke in Andrews, "let's drink to the benefit, what?"

A general laugh cleared the air.

"Clayton," asked Desmond, "what chance has a chap with a few thousand pounds to go in business in New York? I see little in the service to show for the time spent in it."

“What business do you know?” replied Clayton.

“None. I’ve inherited just enough to make me want to do something with it, and as I am not lazy or exactly stupid, I am willing to attack anything.”

“How much have you got?” asked Andrews.

“Well, of all questions,” gasped Dariel.

“Oh, I don’t mind saying. It’s a matter of, perhaps, forty thousand pounds in all. Most of it is immediately available, easily twenty-five thousand pounds.”

“Desmond, that is enough money to keep you in ease and luxury during a long life, using the interest on it alone. By omitting luxury, you might replace it with a wife. There are about five hundred thousand men in New York who could suggest how you could double that in six months in four hundred and ninety thousand different schemes, each of which they knew was an assured success.

“There are, perhaps, two hundred high-class stock brokers’ offices which would receive you with open arms and assign to you a special clerk whose duty would consist in supplying you with absolutely sure tips on the market, ‘obtained direct from the private secretary of the heaviest operator on the street.’ You would find him a charming and interesting companion while your money lasted. It would take me too long to describe how all the doors would be opened to you. But my advice to you is to pass them all up, keep your money invested at a reasonable and safe rate of interest and if you must go into business take a position in some concern to your liking and learn that business

from the ground up before you venture into it."

"But you didn't do that, did you?" asked Dariel.

"My father had a small iron mill. When I was seventeen it was conveyed to me that if I, as his only child, wanted to succeed to his business, it was time for me to learn the trade. It was a bitter pill when all my friends were chasing around town with the girls, but I am proud to say I swallowed it and for four years worked among the men in dirt and overalls. Then my father died unexpectedly, but I had mastered the business and it was mine. The habits of economy and thrift learned among those workmen of small resources and large families were an additional capital. After I had multiplied the annual output many times I sold out and with the acquaintance and connections I had made, went on. At this moment, however, if an evil turn of the wheel should clean me out, I could go back to any plant and be a valuable and well-paid workman. Jobs would hunt a man who can do anything in a mill.

"You see, Desmond, you can't compete in that class until you get behind you the years of education it is too late for you to acquire. You could doubtless make a living in many positions, but to be master of any business, it is safe to say, in these days of high standards, that you must be born to it and made to fit it afterward as well." Turning to Dariel, Clayton added, "Perhaps I have forfeited your interest in me by this explanation."

"On the contrary, you have increased it; but, I shudder to think what it must require to hold

the undivided attention of such a many-sided man."

"Many sides but few attractions. I am afraid I am only amusing when talking about myself. I hope you are all going to like 'The Bat,' " Clayton added, changing the subject, "it is a baffling mystery play."

"Oh, how lovely!" Dariel cried, "I adore mystery."

Until they left for the theatre the conversation was given over to mysticism.

A week later the Thurston party returned from Washington. Clayton met them at the train. There was only time for luncheon as they were going right through to Canada on the three-thirty train that afternoon. Clayton took them all to Thurston's bank and then to the Ritz.

After the order had been given and they sat discussing the sights of Washington, Thurston asked permission to read his mail. He read the last letter he opened, twice, then handed it to Clayton saying, "Read it aloud."

Clayton read:

"You will be surprised to know that Archibald Marsden drove his car over the cliffs not far from Dover and was instantly killed. The papers called it an accident but the beggar owed everybody and most of us think he took the short cut to get out of debt."

As he concluded, he looked over at Dariel. Her eyes were full of tears.

"Poor Grace," she said, in a brave effort

at composure, "regardless of what Marsden was, this will be a serious blow to her."

"Most serious," repeated Clayton, "I never knew such devotion to such an unworthy object."

"Dariel," said Mrs. Thurston, "you must write Grace at once giving her our deepest sympathy and telling her that as soon as we are settled in Canada she must come over to visit us."

"That she must," added Thurston, "if I have to go over after her."

In spite of the fact that no one cared for Marsden, the news of his death kept their luncheon from being a jolly affair and all seemed relieved when it was over and time to start for the Grand Central Depot.

It was a very sombre party standing on the station platform, waiting to say the final good-bye. Just before Dariel got on the train, she gave her hand to Clayton saying, "I don't believe you will be coming to Canada for your holiday after all but I hope—" her voice broke and she turned her head away.

"Perhaps, not," he said tenderly. "Fate seems to have taken a hand in the adjusting of our lives, but even if I don't, I shall never live to forget the most wonderful little character I ever knew."

"All aboard," the porter cried, and those departing left their friends and loved ones, waiting to catch another glimpse of them from the windows, for a thrown kiss or the wave of the hand—the last tokens of farewell. Dariel and Desmond stood on the rear platform and waved their adieus to Andrews and Clayton.

“They make a fine couple, eh, what?” said Andrews. “Desmond is clean off his head about the girl and he has the perseverance of the devil. I shouldn’t wonder if she would not have to marry him one of these days in order to get rid of him, eh, what?”

Clayton put his hat on thoughtfully. There was no use to wave it again, the train was lost to sight.

XXVIII

As soon as Clayton parted from Andrews, he sent a long cable to Grace, addressed to her home. He was notified the next morning that it had not been delivered. He then cabled her bankers for her address, prepaying an answer. Their reply was that she was not in the country and that they had been instructed not to give her address, but that they would forward any communications.

For a moment Clayton was filled with delight. Undoubtedly she was on her way to America, coming to him. Then he began to wonder why she should have taken such precaution to keep her address unknown. He rushed down to Gray's office and demanded to see him at once.

"Well," said Gray, "I think it is about time you came to see me unless you have engaged another attorney. Do you realize all that has been going on in your Company since you have been here or are you still taking a vacation from business?"

"Hang business and the company can take care of itself for the present. What I want to know is, what has become of Grace? Where did she go after Marsden's death?"

"How did you hear of his death?"

"Through friends," Clayton replied curtly. "Tell me where she is or whether she has arrived in America yet?"

"She is in America."

"Where?" Clayton cried.

"I only heard from her myself the other day," Gray went on, unheeding Clayton's question. "It seems she started for America before Marsden's death."

"Started for America before Marsden's death," repeated Clayton incredulously.

"And only heard of it after her arrival," Gray continued. "She wanted me to book her passage and help her to get immediately back to England. With some difficulty I showed her the folly of that; pointed out that by the time she arrived he would have been buried and that there was nothing for her to return to. I promised to look after everything for her so she has remained."

"Where?"

"I am not at liberty to state."

"Gray," said Clayton, slowly rising and coming to him, "will you give me her address peaceably or shall I choke it out of you?"

"Clayton, she asked me not to give it to you and I will not do it without her consent. She did not explain why she wished me to keep it a secret, but I assume she feels that in leaving her there with Marsden, after at least all you said to me about your inability to do so, you did not desire to see her again and she in turn would not permit you to think she was placing herself in your way. Now go ahead and choke if you think it proper."

"You are right so far as what she thinks is concerned, but I must have her address *now*."

"Keep cool, old chap, and be fair. What do you want to say to her?"

"I want to tell her that I forgive her for preferring Marsden to me while he lived, but that

now that he is dead, I want her to marry me at once and not wait one single day for any reason in the world."

"Well said, Clayton. I promised not to give you her address, but, if when I go out of this room for a moment, you should see a memorandum of it lying on my desk and pocket it, that is not my affair."

He scribbled on a pad and left the room. Clayton read, "Grace Marsden, 1347 Spruce Street, Philadelphia."

When Gray returned, Clayton held out his hand saying, "Gray, I'll drop in to see you in a day or two and we will go over those Company details."

The twelve o'clock train landed him at Broad Street Station at two, and at precisely two-ten P. M. his taxicab stopped at the Spruce Street house.

"Mrs. Marsden will not be in until 4.30," the maid said. "Will you call later?"

"Tell her Mr. Gray called and will return at five."

Clayton decided to employ the interval by driving through the Park and studying out what he could expect her to say and what he would say in reply. Never did the hours seem so slow, but they finally passed, and the maid ushered him into the old-fashioned parlor. The room was so dark coming in from the street, that he almost stumbled to a seat near the door.

In a moment he could hear some one coming downstairs and Grace entered with "Oh, Arthur, so good of you to come to me in my trouble;" and then stood still in amazement.

Clayton arose at her approach, and stood

with his back to what little light came in from the bowed front shutters, and as she neared him, caught her quickly in his arms saying, "There is no trouble, sweetheart. All your troubles are over."

His voice and his touch were too much for Grace. She collapsed in his arms but only for a moment, then she opened her eyes and looked up into his face, saying, "Edward, can I ever make you understand, can I ever make you know, what pity will induce one to do? Poor Mars stole that coat—took it back and got the money for it. I never knew where it was until you had gone. I supposed he had pawned it. I couldn't bear to have you think him so low and I lied to you before I realized what I was saying. Forgive me, dear, I suppose you can never forget such a dreadful thing, but please don't punish me in any way that will prevent my being near you and seeing your dear face once in a while."

Clayton held her to him while she made her confession in breathless anxiety. His happiness was made complete by her explanation.

When she had finished, he said, "But you told Gray not to give me your address."

"That is true, dear; how did you find me?"

"Did you suppose anything could keep me from you when I heard you were free?"

"I never expected to see you again. I thought you had lost faith in me."

"Then why, Grace, did you take the precaution to forbid Gray to give me your address?"

"Fearing you might think it necessary to look after me. I could not stand that."

"It is necessary, nevertheless. I shall stay

over here tonight, get a license in the morning and marry you as soon as I do, so we can return to New York as man and wife in the sight of man as well as God. Marsden was a black-guard, but he has closed his account satisfactorily and you belong to me.”

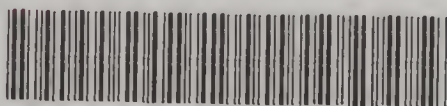
“I do, Edward; but, oh, oh! are you sure you wish to foreclose your mortgage?”

“Yes, beloved, the interest has been piling up and only in marriage can it be satisfied—until death us do part.”

THE END

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